

# **THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER SUPPORT TEAM IN PREVENTING EARLY SCHOOL DROPOUT IN A HIGH SCHOOL**

**LIEZL TERHOEVEN**

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degree of

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Supervisor: Lynette Collair

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## **DECLARATION**

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

December 2009

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to establish whether the support of the Teacher Support Team (TST) might have an impact on High School learners to stay in school. My specific focus was on how the TST members experienced the support that was given to learners and how learners experienced the support given to them. I used a basic interpretive design. I used focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. My study shows that the TST of a High School needs to have a proper structure to function in building resilience in learners. A proper structure will enable them to develop a healthy support system that could address the various barriers in learning that learners may encounter. All the role players, who were involved in the research, knew their rights and responsibilities towards this process. I conclude by acknowledging the limitations of this study and recommending further research.

## OPSOMMING

Hierdie ondersoek is daarop gemik om vas te stel in watter mate die ondersteuning van die Onderwys Ondersteunings Span (OOS) 'n invloed het op Hoërskool leerders om op skool te bly. My spesifieke fokus was op hoe die lede van die OOS die ondersteuning, wat hulle vir die leerders gebied het, ondervind het en hoe die leerders die ondersteuning, wat hulle by die OOS ontvang het, ondervind het. Ek het van fokusgroepe en semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude gebruik gemaak. My ondersoek toon dat die OOS van Hoërskole 'n meer gestruktureerde stelsel nodig het waarbinne hulle kan funksioneer. 'n Gestruktureerde stelsel sal verseker dat daar 'n gesonde ondersteunings sisteem gebou word. Dit sal ook verseker dat leerders met leerstoornisse se behoeftes aangespreek kan word. Alle rolspelers was ten volle bewus van hul verantwoordelikheid in die navoringsproses. Ten slotte wil ek, in die lig van sekere tekortkominge wat by hierdie studie ervaar is, verdere navorsing op hierdie terrein aanbeveel.

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## **DEDICATION**

To my parents:

Arthur Reginald and Magrieta Elizabeth Terhoeven,  
where I am, is because of the sacrifices you have made.

Thank you

I love you

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) is a policy document in education that makes adequate provision for support and flexibility in the curriculum. The aim of this policy is to build a national system of education and training. This is in recognition of the need to transform an inequitable and divided educational system inherited from the Apartheid era and to provide the platform for knowledge, skills, innovation and growth for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Ministry of Education, 2000). It is about the accommodation of all learners with barriers to learning and to improve the teaching and learning practices in South Africa's Education System (Department of Education, 2002).

The White Paper 6: Building an inclusive education and training system (Department of Education, 2001) focuses on the importance of providing support to learners, educators and the system as a whole. The support in schools will focus primarily on the Teacher Support Teams (TST), which are small groups of teachers, with preferably at least one person with experience in learning support, whose function is to support the learning process by identifying and addressing barriers to learning and to participate actively in the school system and accessing support from the community (Department of Education, 2001).

Learners, who are at risk, need special intervention and a nurturing environment, where they feel safe and wanted. Dropping out of school has major implications for the individual, the education system as well as society. Rumberger and Larson (1998), argue that without proper interventions learners will become repeaters of grades, develop drug and alcohol abuse problems, and inevitably become school dropouts. Therefore schools need to identify learners, who are at risk of dropping out of school, and develop and

implement appropriate support programmes. In this regard, the Teacher Support Teams should take the lead in ensuring that these support systems are developed, in place and that they function.

This study will explore the experiences of a Teacher Support Team (TST) in its support of learners who were at risk of dropping out of school. The researcher will explore how the learners, who had dropped out of school, experienced the support that they received or did not receive from the Teacher Support Team (TST) prior to dropping out.

## **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

### **1.2.1 Personal motivation**

As a High School educator, the researcher is confronted daily with children who drop out of school. The high percentage of school dropouts in this particular High School, where the researcher is a teacher, is of concern for a number of reasons. Official statistics provided by the school's registration official, show that for 2005 the enrolment was at 1120 learners. By the end of 2005 only '±800' learners were recorded on the school's registration system. This means that '±320' had left the school system. This trend, according to the researcher's personal experience, appears to be recurring annually. The researcher is also interested in why the dropout rates remain high, despite the presence of a functioning Teacher Support Team (TST) at the school. The lack of certainty about the exact dropout rate, poses a serious challenge, in terms of management of this problem, to the school system and the local community.

The researcher is also a resident of the local community and observes daily how these learners, who drop out of school, become disengaged from the formal/informal economic system because they neither have the qualifications, skills or experience to enter these markets. These concerns are highlighted by Bhorat (2005), who indicates that the unemployment rate, per educational level in South Africa, is the highest for the incomplete Secondary School

population. He is of the opinion that 75% of the South African youth do not complete their Secondary School Education.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Most research, concerning the TST, is done in relatively wealthy and developed countries, such as those done in the United States of America by Chalfant, Van Dusen Phys and Moultire (1997), in the United Kingdom by Hanko (1990) and Norwich and Daniëls (1997), in New Zealand by Moore, Glynn and Gold (1993). The above studies reflect a level of economic wealth that facilitates greater service provision, mostly for learners who are living with disadvantage and who are facing barriers to learning, whilst it also promotes the influence of principles such as normalisation (Johns, 2004:3). A lack of research and programmes related to school dropout as well as the importance of the TST in resilience building in South Africa, made it difficult to find the information that was needed.

However, the acknowledgement of support for all in South Africa, comes with the transformation of the entire educational system, which was unequal and disruptive under Apartheid, to equal opportunities for all.

Apartheid created a history in the Education System, which reflects extreme neglect and lack of provision and support for the majority of children in South Africa (Engelbrecht, 2006). This lack of provision and support is reflected in The White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001), which acknowledged the failure of the Education System to respond to the needs of a substantial number of learners, not only those previously defined as having special needs, but also to address the diverse needs of learners in South Africa. It gives guidelines on how to accommodate all these learners, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. It also recognises that many children experience barriers to learning and thus have special educational needs at some time during their schooling. The recognition of special educational needs places a huge responsibility on schools to provide adequate support to all learners experiencing barriers to learning.

In response to the above, the NCSNET and NCESS reports (Department of Education, 1997), pointed to the existence of a broad range of learning needs which, if not effectively addressed, could contribute to continued failure to learn. These learning needs can be addressed effectively if schools decide to break away from “changing the person” to a system changing approach, which says “accept learners” as they are and “adapt the curriculum” (Landsberg, 2005).

This kind of support is possible if schools have good structures and proper guidelines in place to support the learners. Many schools in South Africa, however, do not have programmes in place to identify, support and guide learners who are at risk of dropping out of school. Educators are battling to provide the quality education that is required for the holistic and healthy development of learners because of the lack of programmes and poor social skills of learners. It is found that poor social skills in people make them vulnerable to psycho-social problems pursuant to the experience of stressful life events (Segrin and Flora, 2000:489).

The role of the TST must not be underestimated when it comes to the building of resilience in learners. Resilience building can help and prevent learners from dropping out of school. The researcher explored the experiences of the teachers regarding the support that was given to learners, and learners' experience on support received from the TST.

## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The researcher posed questions, based on the observation that was made about the high dropout numbers in High School. Both questions focus on the experience of support.

- What are the TST's experiences regarding the support, that they have given to learners?
- How did the learners experience the support that the TST had given them prior to their dropout?

## **1.5 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The primary aim of this study is to explore the experiences of the TST in providing support to learners. In order to achieve the goals of the study the following objectives have been identified:

### **1.5.1 Sub-Aims**

1. To determine the TST's experiences regarding their support to learners.
2. To explore the learners' experience of support within the school context, prior to dropping out of school.

## **1.6 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

The choice of an appropriate paradigm for your research is important as it provides the researcher with a framework to shape and validate design decisions. The paradigms that are relevant to qualitative research include interpretation, critical theory, feminism, postmodernism, phenomenology (Merriam, 2002:38). An interpretive/constructivist paradigm was chosen for the purpose of this study.

The interpretive/constructivist paradigm was suitable for this study because the researcher was interested in how both learners and teachers experienced the support given and support received. This approach has given the researcher an opportunity to learn more about how individuals experience and interact with their social world and the meaning it has for them (Merriam, 2002:4).

## **1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The use of a basic qualitative interpretive research design enabled the researcher to get a clear understanding of the experiences of the participants. This type of design is useful for those who are interested in understanding the meaning that a certain phenomenon has for those involved in the process (Merriam, 2002:37). Through this approach the researcher was able to



understand how the research subjects interpreted their experience of the support process and the meaning they attribute to their experiences.

## **1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **1.8.1 Sampling**

The researcher used purposive sampling. The reason for this type of sampling was because the research study was aimed at the participants' experiences of support given and support received. Group coordinators of the TST and High School dropout learners of the same school were interviewed.

### **1.8.2 Data collection**

The collection of data was in the form of semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Documents were also part of data collection. The data sources that were used in the research were the TST of the High School, the dropout learners of the school, personal documents of learners and the Centralised Education Management Information System (CEMIS).

### **1.8.3 Data analysis**

Data analysing is the process of making sense out of the data that was collected during the research (Merriam, 1988:127). All the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Seidman (1998) explains that analysing semi-structured interviews entails close examination of the data collected in order to find an answer to your research questions and after the analysis you go a step further and interpret the findings.

## **1.9 DESCRIPTION OF RELEVANT TERMS**

### **1.9.1 Teacher Support Teams**

Teacher Support Teams (TST) are school-based, problem-solving groups which function to support learners indirectly through teacher collaboration. The principle behind these support teams is to make the most of the

knowledge and skills of the teachers already present in a school (DoE: 2002). It focuses on empowering teachers to develop preventative and promoting strategies in the health-promoting school framework (Engelbrecht, 2006). Different names have been given to the above term such as Educators Support Team, Institution Level Support Team, School Based Support Team, but for the purpose of this study, I will use the term Teacher Support Team (TST).

### **1.9.2 A learner who dropped out of school**

A learner who dropped out of school refers to learners who did not complete High School. Reglin (1996:16) defines a dropout as: “a person, who left the Educational Institution, has not graduated and is not currently enrolled in regular school anywhere”.

### **1.9.3 At risk learners**

At risk learners include those who are in danger of developing significant learning and behaviour problems and are likely to fail in school or in life (Frymier and Gansneder, 1989). They have difficulty in learning basic skills, exhibit unacceptable behaviour, and cannot keep up with their peers (Pierce, 1994).

### **1.9.4 A High School or Secondary School**

A High School is a school that starts with grade eight (Senior Phase) and it ends with grade twelve (Further Education and Training Phase).

## **1.10 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS**

### **Chapter 1**

The first chapter gives a brief overview of the theoretical and situational context within which this research took place. It presents the central research problem and related research questions. The researcher uses qualitative

research to get more insight on the practice and functioning of the TST and how they support learners who are at risk of dropping out.

## **Chapter 2**

This chapter focuses on the literature review on dropouts and the TST. The following aspects will be discussed: the phenomenon of dropout, the definitions of dropout, the factors that lead to dropout in South Africa and a broad description of some of the factors as well as the rationale of the TST, aims and functions of the TST, effective skills of a TST member, collaboration and qualities of collaboration. The role and responsibilities of the role-players in support structures.

## **Chapter 3**

Chapter three focuses on the empirical study. It discusses the data collection process.

## **Chapter 4**

Chapter four consists of the discussion of the findings and recommendations for further research. Recommendations for further research focus on suggestions to improve the functioning of TSTs in High Schools in order to render effective support.

### **1.10.1 Conclusion**

In Chapter One I reflected on the personal starting point of this research. It describes my background experience on what I have observed in the school system as a high school teacher. I gave a brief overview on Education in South Africa, some of the Policies as well as different role-players concerned about the school dropout rate in the country.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

# **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The literature review aims to discuss the phenomenon of school dropout and the factors that put learners at risk of dropping out. It explores the ways in which the Teacher Support Team (TST) of a school can provide effective support. This is done by adopting an Inclusive Education and Training System. This system is organised in such a way that it provides various levels of support to learners and educators (DoE, 2001).

This literature review will focus on theories to explain the phenomenon of school dropout and the functioning of the TST with regards to support. Theories can be utilised to create meaning and to extend a person's knowledge about certain aspects. It helps to generate insight into an idea and it can also suggest alternative ways of understanding situations that are not easily understandable from an insider's point of view.

It is important to note that some of the literature comes from wealthy developed countries as well as from South Africa.

### **2.2 SCHOOL DROPOUT**

#### **2.2.1 The phenomenon of school dropout**

The right to basic education is a fundamental human right and it is reflected in the South African Constitution and in White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001:11) of the Education Department. This White Paper states that: "... as South Africans we carry a special responsibility to ensure that all learners pursue their learning potential to the fullest".

The phenomenon of dropping out of school can be seen as a result of a long-term process of disengaging from the school. This phenomenon has grown rapidly over the years and has been viewed by educationalists, parents and other role-players with great concern.

### **2.2.2 Definition of a learner who dropped out of school**

A learner, who dropped out of school, refers to someone who did not complete his/her High School. A learner who dropped out can be defined as a person who left the Educational Institution, has not graduated and is not currently enrolled in a regular school anywhere (Reglin, 1996:16); or as a learner who leaves school before High School graduation (Kennedy and Morton, 1999, Haycock and Huang, 2001); a learner who does not complete a state approved educational programme (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2002) or a learner who is withdrawn from the school records (Barnet, Arroyo, Devoe and Duggan, 2004). It also refers to learners who leave school without a basic qualification (Luyten, 2003).

Croninger and Lee (2001) regards dropping out as the ultimate form of educational withdrawal by learners who are likely to have trouble in school and is of the opinion that learners, who drop out of school, face substantially higher unemployment rates, lower lifelong earnings, higher incidence of criminal activity and have a greater likelihood of health problems than students who complete High School. Dropping out of High School before completion has been a challenge for educators, parents and employers for many years. It has a direct impact on service delivery, the economy of the country and crime (Haycock and Huang, 2001).

### **2.2.3 Categories of dropout**

Kennedy and Morton (1999) divided dropout into four different categories. They are: quiet, disruptive, high academic and in-school dropouts.

- 1.) **Quiet dropouts** are low-achieving students who experience failure over a period of time and, therefore, simply walk away from school when they attain the age to legally do so.
- 2.) **Disruptive dropouts** are low-achieving students who act out their frustration at lack of school success. These students are often suspended for long periods of time or are expelled from the public school classroom and are labelled push outs.
- 3.) **High academic achievers**, who drop out are also considered push outs because they leave out of boredom as well as resistance to rigid school rules.
- 4.) **In-school dropouts** are those students, perceived to be non achievers or minimal achievers, without acting-out behaviour.

#### 2.2.4 School dropout in South Africa

School dropout in South Africa is not just a concern for the researcher, but also one of the major concerns for the National Education Department. The Minister of Education stated in the Annual Report of 2005, that only half of the 80 000 learners, who annually entered grade 1, have completed matric; a dropout rate of 50% (Department of Education, 2005). One of the major concerns for the Member of Executive Council (MEC) of Education in the Western Cape was not the 85% matric pass rate of 2005, but the high percentage of school dropouts in the province. He declared that the matric pass rate failed to reflect the high percentage of school dropouts (Dugmore, 2005).

The Development Policy Research Unit at the University of Cape Town undertook research that showed a significant drop in school attendance by 16 - to 18-year-olds. They also showed that the dropout rate in the Coloured and Indian communities might not be driven entirely by poverty, "it seemed that the reason why Coloured and Asian learners are leaving school, was more of a choice than of a necessity" (The Star, 2007). The Ministerial committee on learner retention in South Africa (2007:7-54) concur the notion of Coloured learners who drop out of school at an early age by stating: "... Coloureds

appear to drop out in large numbers in Secondary School, generally around the age of 15". They are of the opinion that there are a considerable number of learners in the age category of 16-18 years who drop out before the completion of High School.

Research from the Human Science Research Council, estimated that there are 551 000 youth dropouts, between grade 1 and grade 11 per year in South Africa (Kraak, 2004). This dropout rate was significantly higher in grades 10, 11 and 12. The UNSECO report of 2007 revealed that South Africa had a dropout rate of 21.3% in 2003 (DOE, 2007:16, 113). The Business Day, 8 January 2007, reported that "only 21% of South Africa's children finished their school careers". This means that one out of every five children in South Africa reaches matric from the day that they entered school.

The research conducted by the Reducing Exploitive Child Labour in South Africa, implied that more than 30% of children feel that their basic needs are not being met, whilst 37% of them battle with financial obstacles to schooling and 27% are working during school hours (Robinson and Pursell, 2003). The South African National Education Department acknowledged that the reason why children are dropping out of school, is because of the inability of the Educational System to recognise and accommodate the diverse range of learning needs and that personal and social problems are some of the main dropout factors that have an impact on a learner's ability to complete his/her schooling (DoE, 2001).

### **2.2.5 International studies on school dropout**

The above findings are consistent with the international trend, which suggests that between 15 - 20% of young people, even in the world's most affluent countries, leave Secondary School without obtaining the knowledge and skills that are important for future success (Fall, 1998:225). The dropout rates in the international education system are: Developing Countries, 20.3%; Sub-Saharan Africa, 33.9%; Developed Countries 2% and the worldwide dropout rate is 13.4% (UNESCO, 2007b:284-285).

The USA is one of the few countries where published data is available on dropout rates and retention. The data reflect a dropout rate of 14.6% with the majority of dropouts being Hispanic learners, with a dropout rate of 34.3%. The Hispanic learner's dropout rate is still the highest, although the country's dropout rate had decreased in 2002. The profile of a Hispanic learner, who dropped out, has been indicated as: poor, low parental education, English as second language, low achiever, higher levels of absenteeism, and most of their friends had dropped out (DoE, 2007:113-116). In the United Kingdom (UK) nearly 20% of the age group 14-19 are out of school and are without any qualifications, whilst 25% of 13 year olds in the USA fail to graduate High School. The UK referred to these learners as "zero status" learners whilst the USA refers to them as dropout learners (UNESCO, 2002).

### **2.2.6 Factors that put learners at risk of dropping out**

There is a new perspective around at risk learners that argues that there are certain circumstances or conditions within the learners' context that put them at risk (Mc Wirther, Mc Wirther. Mc Wirther, Mc Wirther, 1998:7-9). The term 'at risk' came from a publication of the report "A Nation at risk", from the National Commission on Excellence in Education (Gardner, 1983). It is used by different professionals such as psychologists, social workers, doctors and educators (Mc Wirther et al., 1998:6).

Educators use it to refer to young people who are at risk of dropping out of the Educational System, and sometimes to indicate children whose current future school career looks problematic. The term "risk" has no value in education unless it is specified what the learner is at risk for and what the level of risk is. It refers to the relationship between poor academic skills, the possibility of mastering specific outcomes, leaving school and becoming a dropout (Pianta and Walsh, 1996:20). It includes those learners who are in danger of developing significant learning and behaviour problems, and are likely to fail in school or in life (Frymier and Gansneder, 1989). These learners find it difficult to learn the basic skills, they show signs of unacceptable behaviour and they cannot keep up with their peers (Pierce, 1994).



Phillips (2005) highlights the various factors, as indicated in **Addendum A**, as warning signs of learners who are 'at risk' of dropping out of school. They include personal, medical, educational, family, social, socio-economic and other additional factors. Other factors that increase the risk of dropping out, within the educational environment, include poor education quality: which is manifested in overcrowded classrooms, poorly trained teachers and a shortage of learning materials (UNESCO, 2007a:12). Although the above factors are some of the universal factors that put learners at risk of dropping out, it is important to recognise that in the South African context other factors, such as academic performance and engagement, transition from Primary- to High School, truancy, social factors such as poverty and HIV/Aids, are also some of the risk factors (Phillips, 2005). Some of the factors will be discussed as identified in the South African context.

### **2.2.6.1 Retention**

The South African Admission Policy for Ordinary Public Schools (DoE, 1998) limits grade retention to a maximum of one year per grade phase. This translates to a maximum of 4 years in the twelve years of schooling. This policy recognises that grade retention seldom results in better learning achievement and frequently has the opposite effect (DoE, 2007:7).

Retention refers to the practice of having a student repeat a grade level because of low academic performance (Roderick, 1995). Retention is one of the most common factors that put learners at risk of dropping out, because the learner might become an overage learner in that particular grade. Overage for a grade is a better predictor for dropping out, than underachievement (Texas Education Agency 1996:3). The grade retention in South Africa is higher in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase than in the General Education and Training (GET) phase (DoE, 2007:35). Grade retention is one of the most powerful predictors of dropping out. Learners who are retained are 2-11 times more likely to drop out during High School than non retained (Blue and Cook, 2004:6). Roderick (1995) identified three aspects of retention that place students at risk of dropping out: 1. Retention does not seem to fix the

problem; 2. It sends a message of failure to the student, who may then suffer from long-term self-esteem and engagement problems; and 3. Retention makes the student overage during adolescence and this increases the risk of disengagement from school. Retention can influence a learner's self-esteem, socio-emotional adjustment, peer relations and school engagement (Anderson, Whipple and Jimmerson, 2002:453).

### ***2.2.6.2 Academic performance and engagement***

The Ministerial Committee on learner retention in South Africa (DoE, 2007:85) acknowledges the importance of educational engagement in the prevention of school dropout. Crothers, Kolbert and Barker (2006) support this acknowledgement by stating that “academic performance and school engagement are some of the indicators that might lead to school dropout”. He refers to academic performance of those learners who struggle in a classroom and fall behind academically, and to school engagement as those learners who become disengaged from the school and develop disciplinary problems, such as high rates of absenteeism and truancy, show poor classroom behaviour, learners who participate less in extramural activities and have bad relationships with teachers and peers (Crothers et al., 2006). They emphasise the fact that education-related issues should be important to policymakers and educators who are concerned with reducing dropout rates in the Education System.

Engagement is multi-dimensional and involves academic and behavioural (observable indicators such as classroom participation and attendance) and cognitive and psychological components (internal indicators such as self-monitoring and a sense of belonging) (DoE, 2007:100). The Ministerial Committee emphasises the importance of the engagement of learners in the school. This can be done by finding ways to enhance learners' interest in and enthusiasm for school, creating a sense of belonging at school, motivation to learn and progress in school, as well as to emphasise the value that learners place on school and learning (DoE, 2007:100).

Learners in low socio-economic neighbourhoods are more likely to become disengaged from school and their dropping out rate is twice as high as that of middle-income families and more affluent neighbourhoods (Blue and Cook 2004:11). McNeil (1995:62) and Crothers et al. (2006) concur with the notion from disengagement and dropping out by learners with low socio-economic backgrounds and who are poor. They state that learners who are overage, who come from single parent families, who have a parent who has dropped out, have parents who provide low support for learning, who take an adult's responsibility, who become a parent and are holding down a job, become disengaged and are at risk of dropping out of school.

#### ***2.2.6.3 The transition from primary school to high school***

South Africa has a transition rate of 95%. This rate is comparable to the world figures but rate below the developed countries. The fact that 95% of learners make the transition from primary to secondary school implies that 5% do not (DoE, 2007:115). This gives us a clear indication that most learners do not drop out when they are at Primary School, it happens when they are at Secondary School.

The transition from Primary School to High School can be a difficult adaptation for learners to make and it is a critical stage for learners to break through. It offers critical, yet neglected, opportunities for intervention and for the formation of significant social attachments, including peer and family relationships (Lan and Lanthier, 2003). Peer and family relationships play a big role in reducing the likelihood of dropping out (Marcus and Sanders-Reio, 2001).

#### ***2.2.6.4 Motivation***

The lack of motivation can also be a factor that may lead to early school dropout. Motivation of learners can be characterized by their willingness to initiate learning activities, their continued involvement in a learning task, and their long-term commitment to learning. It is an energiser of behaviour and

learners can go into a motivational state as the result of multiple interactions of variables such as: the need or drive level (the urgency to address a basic urge), the incentive value of the goal (how big the reward will be), the learner's expectations (the possibility to succeed), the availability of appropriate responses (applying learned behaviour) and the presence of conflicting or contradictory motives and unconscious factors (Strydom, 2005:105). The most basic element which underpins motivation is the ability of learners to have a dream or a vision. Learners with vision will try each day to take one small step towards the goals that they have set for themselves and they are careful in the choices that they make (Strydom, 2005:106).

The ability to bounce back from failure, disappointments, disaster, trauma, setbacks and criticism can be viewed as aspects of motivation. These aspects of motivation can be defined as resilience. Resilience is an element which determines how high a person can rise above that which threatens to wear them down (Reivich and Shatte, 2002). Jonas and Nabors (2000:17) refer to resilience as a systematic outcome which is the result between inner strengths and outer help. Motivation and resilience are two of the most important aspects when dealing with learners who experience life problems. Brown (2001:83) supports the idea of exposing learners to the dimensions of resilience. He also describes how effective a Resilience Education Programme can be in helping learners to deal with life's problems.

#### ***2.2.6.5 Suspension and expulsion***

Students are usually expelled from school as a punishment for bad behaviour. Expulsion can be viewed as an asset to the teacher, but it does not help the learner. Learners see it as an opportunity to rest, to take a break or to take part in other activities, which are not healthy for them as children (Kennedy and Morton 1999:65).

In South Africa only the Governing Body has the right to suspend a learner from attending the school. This can be done as a correctional measure for a period not longer than one week; or pending a decision as to whether the

learner is to be expelled from the school by the Head of Department of Education. In the Western Cape a learner at a Public School may be expelled only by the Head of Department of Education; if found guilty of serious misconduct after a fair hearing (Government Gazette, 15 November 1996).

The schools must keep a record of all the relevant documents and information of learner behaviour that may be constituted as misconduct. Most importantly, the schools must provide documentation on how they supported the learner in rectifying his/her poor social skills, poor communication or poor conflict resolution (DoE, 1996).

#### ***2.2.6.6 Poverty and HIV/AIDS***

The development of an inclusive education and training system must take into account the incidence and the impact that the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases have in South Africa. It needs to analyse the effects that HIV/AIDS and other diseases have on the education system, and appropriate programmes need to be developed and implemented. Programmes that need to be developed and implemented are special measures that will assist with the strengthening of eg. information system, the identifying orphans, co-ordinating support and care programmes, referral procedures, and developing guidelines on how to support, orphans and children in distress (DoE, 2001).

Poverty in South Africa manifests in ill health, under nourishment, deprivation of privileges, unsupportive environments in informal settlements and squatter camps, language deficiencies, limited social status and a negative view of the future. Other factors which contribute to poverty in this country are the backlog in technology, conflict and violence, crime and substance abuse (Prinsloo, 2005:451). The socio economic condition of learners is a critical issue and it creates barriers, psychological, financial or otherwise, for learners' attendance at school (DoE, 2007:17).

Poverty has been identified as a major risk factor for learners to dropout of school. UNESCO (2007a) has identified poverty as a major obstacle in children's education. Dawes and Donald (1994) support the notion by stating

that poverty, housing and health are some of the big challenges that education is facing at the moment. These factors also have a direct impact on the effectiveness on education as a whole.

More than 26,4% of children between the age of 5 and 14 years are economically active in Sub-Sahara Africa and this includes South Africa (Robinson and Pursell, 2003). The reasons for this, is that learners are confronted with families who are economically unstable and weak, and family members who are living with HIV/AIDS. Learners stay at home to look after family members who need medical attention due to HIV/AIDS infection (Robinson and Pursell, 2003). McNeal (1995:62) confirms the employment concern of the youth by stating that “dropouts rationally choose work over school ..., to obtain the status of adult roles...and to seek employment of financial burdens”. Many girls drop out of school because they must take care of those who are sick or because they fall pregnant at an early age.

In many instances, learners are forced to drop out of school, because of costs related to school fees, uniforms and transport to school (Robinson and Pursell, 2003; McNeal, 1995:62).

## **2.3 THE ECO-SYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVE**

It is imperative that education authorities familiarise themselves with the underlying theories that explain the phenomenon of school drop out. These theories can help generate insight into this phenomenon, and it can also suggest alternative ways of understanding situations that are not easily perceived from an insider perspective. These theories can furthermore help in creating an understanding of the causes of barriers to learning and development and which changes need to be made to eliminate such barriers (Engelbrecht, Howell and Bastte, 2002).

The researcher will focus on the eco-systemic perspective. School dropout will be explained according to the eco-systemic perspective theory. The researcher regards this as a suitable theory for the South African situation.

### **2.3.1 Definition**

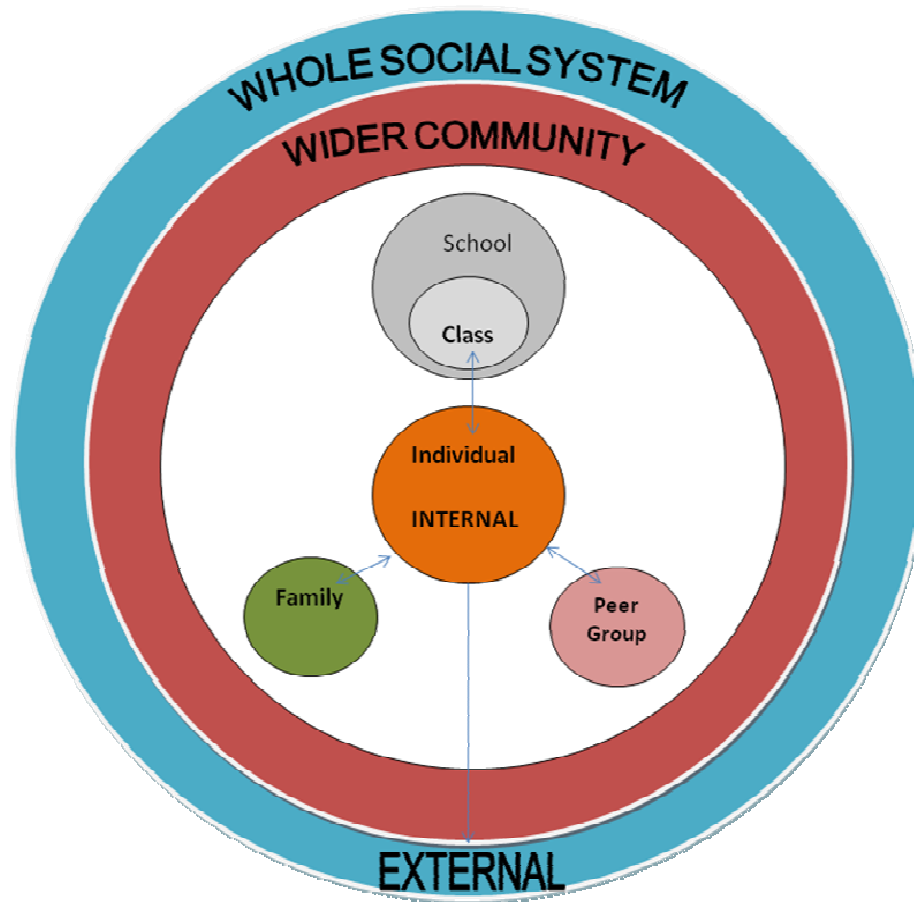
The eco-systemic perspective evolved out of a combination of some of the principles of ecological and system theories. It is rooted in the insight that we cannot understand and explain a phenomenon as a whole by dividing it into smaller parts and then studying these in isolation. Attempting to do so would be reductionistic and will not be a true reflection of the experience that the person encounters (Engelbrecht, Howell and Bastte 2002).

Donald, Lazarus and Lowana (2002) describe the eco-systemic perspective as a blend of ecological and systems theory views of human interactions between individuals and between different levels of the social context. They describe the Constructivist Perspective as a view that sees knowledge as constructed by individuals, groups, and societies and not simply transferred.

### **2.3.2 The Eco-Systemic Model**

From the Eco-Systemic Perspective, different levels of systems in the social context influence and are influenced by one another in a continuous process of dynamic balance, tension, and interplay. An individual person or situation can be thought of as being simultaneously both a discrete entity and part of a system, a community system and a social system (Fig.1.1.). Each level of system can be seen as having its own subsystems. An individual consists of multiple systems such as physical, cognitive, spiritual, personal and social. These subsystems are in constant interaction with each other, as well as with other whole systems, thereby shaping and limiting each other. A small change at one level will affect the entire system. The interaction and change will have different consequences for different learners, because what is perceived and described as reality is a product or creation of the observer (Donald et al., 1997).

School dropout cannot be understood in isolation from contextual factors as there is a complex interplay among the learner, family, school, and community variables, as well as risk and protective factors (DOE, 2007:100).



**Figure 1.1: Systems within the whole social context (Donald, 1997)**

In order to understand the reasons why learners are dropping out, it is important to understand the context in which the learner is living and functioning on a daily basis. A context does not just contain the learners and their actions; it is relational, it is shaped by individuals, tools, resources, intentions, and ideas in a particular setting, within a particular time. Contexts are inherently social, reflecting and framing interaction. The most important facet of any context is the other people who share a particular here and now (Pianta and Walsh, 1996:68).

South Africa is a country with diversity. This diversity includes diversity of people, geographical features, climate conditions, population density and living conditions. It is because of this diversity that many different social



contexts may exist in our country. It is critical to understand how the dynamics of race, social class, gender, and other areas of exploitation and oppression in society as a whole influence what happens in every school in South Africa. Through diversity the values and norms of society are reflected in the classroom, through interaction with the school, with the families and peer group(s) of the students in the class, the community and the social system as a whole. The Education White Paper 6 (DOE, 2001) makes provision for support by means of the systems approach and the collaboration between these systems (Landsberg, 2005).

With the above factors in mind it is important that dropping out of school must not be viewed as a gender or age factor, it is more a social capital factor, because of the reasons learners are leaving school at an early age. Blue and Cook (2004) acknowledge that there are many factors that influence dropping out, this includes the conditions of schooling, individual personality traits, home environment and the economic context within which the students live.

### **2.3.3 School culture and a positive environment**

The White paper 6 (DOE, 2001) outlines the following principles as important principles that schools need to be aware of in rendering effective support:

1. schools need to foster a holistic and integrated support provision through intersectoral collaboration;
2. they need to develop a community based support system which includes a preventative approach to support;
3. schools need to acknowledge that all children and youth can learn and that children and youth need support.

It is imperative that schools consider the social context in which they operate in developing a positive school environment. Lee and Burkum (2002) refer to school environment as “cultural geography”. They state that: “the culture politics of a school has a powerful effect on how young people make sense of schooling, the spaces that exist for them to be listened to, and how they work to shape schools as places” (Lee and Burkum, 2002). A positive school environment can be viewed as a place where learners experience caring,

respect, and encouragement from teachers, adults and peers. This environment can make a difference for learners who are at-risk of dropping out of school (South, Baumer, and Lutz, 2003). The school as an organization can affect learner's decision to stay in school or to drop out.

Learners are less likely to drop out of school in which they feel they have positive relationships with their teachers (Lee and Burkum, 2003; DOE, 2007:77). The relationship between learners and teachers has a direct impact on how learners feel about themselves and how they view their successes. A poor relationship with teachers can be a spontaneous factor for learners to drop out of school (Carley, 1994). South, Baumer and Lutz (2003) support the above statement of poor relationships between learners and teachers and the impact it has on dropout, by stating that: "most dropouts cannot identify one teacher to whom they could go for help, and most believe that no one at the school cares about them."

Learners who feel different, unwelcome, and incapable of succeeding in school will eventually drop out, because they internalise the experience as a negative reflection of who they are and see themselves as incompetent of succeeding in school (Jordon, Lara and McPartland, 1996). Learners of all ages and backgrounds even those who seem isolated and disconnected, want a teacher who cares about them (Bernard, 1996). Caring teachers can be viewed as an important source of social capital for learners, and this type of teacher-based approach moderates the probability of learners dropping out of school by nearly fifty percent (Croninger and Lee, 2001).

A positive school environment can be achieved by adopting a whole school development plan and healthy school approach. This approach starts with the school policies and practises. The policies and practises as well as certain characteristics of a high school can be some of the risk factors for dropping out (Crothers et al., 2006). Numerous studies have found that the size of a school has a direct impact on risk factors. Schools with smaller enrolments can have better interpersonal relationships among students and adults; teachers are more supportive of students, and the curriculum more focused

and rigorous and lower dropout rates (Crothers et al., 2006). Blue and Cook (2004) are of the opinion that the school size influences the school outcomes. They believe that smaller schools are generally more effective at retaining students than large schools. Blue and Cooks (2004) findings show that a small school organization reduces the risk of retention and dropping out and the benefits are especially great for low-achieving and low-income students.

Rumberger's (1996) studies confirm that academic factors are powerful indicators of dropping out. He stated that schools can do nothing about their learners' demographic and social characteristics, but they can change their practices, because it has a direct impact on the learners' attitude towards school. Conceptually, school personnel need to emphasise development of learners' competencies rather than dwelling on their deficits, they should break away from "changing the person" to a system change approach, which says accept learners as they are and adapt the curriculum (Landsberg, 2005:62; DOE, 2007:100).

The White Paper 6 (DOE, 2001:6) acknowledges the fact that the education and training system failed to accommodate learners' learning needs. The learners' ability to stay in school and to identify with the academic work runs parallel to the success he/she experience, this experience of success will enable the learner to identify with school. Academic identification and self-perceptions are important factors in preventing learners from leaving school at an early stage (Griffen, 2002:71). Finn's (1989) theoretical work linking extracurricular participation to dropping out of high school declares that students engage in school activities at different rates and thus identify with the value of school and education.

## **2.4 THE HISTORY OF THE TEACHER SUPPORT TEAM**

Teacher Support Teams (TST) is a very useful way for teachers to form a support network and to enhance optimal learning. As the name implies, teacher support teams, is a group of individuals working together in or as a team with the aim of providing support to an identified target group or

individual. The teacher support team is first of all school-based, thus indicating that the members of the TST are any professionals in the school or outside (when experts from outside the school are necessary) (Husen and Postlethwaite, 1994). Secondly, in its simplest form, support within the school context means a group of colleagues who are available to assist the classroom teacher with problems which may be difficult to solve alone.

Whilst support may focus on an individual level, the support function of the TST must also focus on the school system as a whole. As a team, the TST refers to various configurations of groups of educators engaged in group decision-making (Husen and Postlethwaite, 1994). The team approach, which is central to the TST concept, implies that in order for the team to be effective it must deal with issues such as leadership, communication, organizational structure, work procedure and interpersonal relationships.

In New Zealand the Department of Education proposed Support Teams within schools as a strategy to handle mainstreaming. The support team concept combines elements of the Method and Resource Teacher, Consulting Teacher and Teacher Assistance Team models (Moore, Glynn and Gold, 1993).

Another approach to the Teacher Support concept is that of Kovalski, Tucker and Stevens (1996). The Instructional Support Team approach of Kovalski, et al. (1996, 44 – 47) is based on the premise that many teachers need help in meeting students' increasingly complex academic, behavioural, social and emotional needs. As such it is designed to provide peer support and problem solving assistance for teachers, and assist teachers with addressing special educational needs in their classrooms.

The influence of Chalfant et al. (1979) is very obvious in previous attempts to establish these teams, particularly in South Africa. Various attempts were made to implement support teams before South Africa's transition to democracy. Schools that fell under the ex-House of Representatives attempted to implement, with limited success, what was known as the

“Ondersteuning Onderwys Hulpspan”. In the Cape Education Department the Didactic Aid and Assistance Teams (DAT) (pre-referral teams), were applied very successfully, but was not implemented in all schools. There is however a difference in the DAT and TST. Whilst the DAT aimed to support the pupil, the TST aims to support teachers.

In South Africa the TST, school-based support teams (SBST), and the institutional-level support teams (ILST) have the same functions. The primary function of the TST is to put in place proper co-ordinated learner and support services. These services will support the learning and teaching process by identifying, and addressing learner, educator and institutional needs. Where appropriate, these teams should be strengthened by expertise from the local community, district-based support teams and higher education institutions (DoE, 2000). Landsberg (2005:67) is of the opinion that the TST should feature strongly in schools and should be flexible. She sees the learning support teacher as the cornerstone in the process of support and that support to learners who experience barriers is a team approach, but the class teacher should be at the centre of the team.

Teacher Support Team is a school-based team of teachers which aims to: act as a collaborative problem solving team, provide immediate support and suggest intervention strategies for classroom teachers, perform a pre-referral function and increase the capacity of teachers to solve and cope with classroom difficulties, particularly, but not exclusively, those related to LSEN (Chalfant, 1979).

Campher (1997:86) described the concept of Teacher Support Team (TST) as school based, where support is given in an indirect way; consultation and collaboration are highlighted processes in the team and specialists can participate on invitation if needed.

The TST may thus be described as a combination of two team arrangements (Husen and Postlethwate, 1994:6240) namely, Teacher Assistance Teams and Schools-based Resource Teams. The first is a problem-solving team

consisting of classroom teachers who serve as advisors or facilitators to other teachers. The second team arrangement is a team formed to solve a particular school-related problem. The latter differs from the TST in that the School-based Resource Team only forms when there is a specific problem which needs attendance. The TST is a permanent arrangement.

Donald et al. (2002:28) use the words School Based Support Teams (SBST). They are of the opinion that the primary function of the SBST is to discuss specific needs and problems referred by teachers in the school and to come up with ideas and solutions for intervention, as well as general developmental and preventative action. They also believe that the effectiveness of the SBST is deeply related to the regular and adequate consultation from support services personnel.

#### **2.4.1 The importance of the TST**

The rationale for the development of the TST has come from three main directions which include:

- Support for teachers in their work with exceptional pupils. They feel that they are failing to provide for them.
- Specialists are only able to meet the needs of a few learners. Help is often provided out of the classroom where it is needed most.
- It is widely accepted that there is a need for professional development in the following areas: exceptional needs, school based in-service work and the development of pastoral skills (Campher, 1997).

Hanko (1990) also proposes the following issues which are addressed by a system of teacher support:

- Difficulties that teachers have in identifying their professional needs
- Difficulty that the support personnel have in making their services relevant and of immediate long term benefits
- Provision of services must be both usable and acceptable whilst maintaining teacher autonomy

Teachers are therefore central to the concept of the TST. Given this, the teacher support team thus seeks to facilitate an environment for problem solving, commitment, mutual respect, and an opportunity to implement teachers' solutions and to allow their needs to evolve (Donald et al., 2002).

### **2.4.2 Aims and functions of the TST**

In line with Chalfant (1989) and Hanco (1990:44-46) the aims and functions of the TST are:

- To facilitate structured and joint problem solving processes, and not to only act as agents of referral for support or services.
- Early intervention so as to be preventative and pro-active.
- To prevent inappropriate referrals to outside agencies or support services
- Use of a "framework of analysis" or problem solving model or approach which could be generalized from one case to another.
- The presenting teacher has autonomy or independence of choice in deciding which strategies or solutions to implement
- A long term process of staff development and or training in relation to "underlying wider issues" related to pupil difficulties in the classroom, with the objective of being able to eventually continue without there being a consultant present.
- A forum or structured process of gaining access to support – (i.e. to available human resources) – for help with immediate concerns, i.e. what Hanco refers to as "disturbed and disturbing children".

According to Kovalski et al. (1996) the teacher support team provides collaborative assistance in needs assessment, programme development, implementation and evaluation. It also provides in identifying teacher and student needs within the school and coordinates the delivery of services to meet these needs. The support team also serves as a forum to within-school problem solving and as a vehicle for collaborative effort between parents, itinerant professionals and the school.

Moore et al. (1993) noted six distinguishing characteristics of the Teacher Support Model:

- It has a team approach to meeting teacher and student needs within the school;
- Intervention is done in the regular classroom and is not a withdrawal or remedial process;
- The support teacher assists the classroom teacher in a consultative way;
- Intervention is a collaborative process of assessment, problem analysis, planning, implementation and systematic evaluation;
- Parents are involved as fully as they wish and
- The team focuses on teacher empowerment.

The Department of Education in South Africa (2001) sees the core function of the TST as:

- Co-ordinating all learner, educator, curriculum and institution development support in the institution.
- Collectively identifying institutional needs and, in particular, barriers to learning at learner, educator, curriculum and institutional-level.
- Collectively developing strategies to address these needs and barriers to learning.
- Drawing on the resources needed, from within and outside of the institution, to address these challenges.
- Monitoring and evaluating the work of the team within an “action-reflection” framework.

Landsberg (2005) sees the role and the responsibility of the TST in South Africa as:

- The in-service training of teachers in the identification, assessment and support of all learners including those who experience barriers to learning;
- Establishing networks that promote effective communication between learners, teachers and parents as well as with non-governmental organisations and welfare, health and justice;
- Identification and discussion of learner development;



- Placement of learners in other schools if necessary;
- Facilitating the sharing of resources;
- Ensuring parental involvement;
- Planning preventative strategies and
- Monitoring and supporting learner progress.

According to The Gauteng Department of Education the TST should consist of:

- A learning support teacher who is competent and innovative, and possesses good collaborative skills;
- The referring teacher;
- The scribe;
- An elected teacher (depending on the needs of the learner);
- The principal - should be involved on a part time basis;
- A school assessment team representative;
- A learner support material committee representative;
- Any co-opted member from outside depending on the needs of the learner;
- The parents of the learner and of course
- The learner (Landsberg, 2005).

### **2.4.3 Skills for TST members**

The following skills are important for the functioning of the TST and the willingness of other teachers to approach the TST for support:

- Confidentiality -- never reveal TST information;
- Credibility – a positive image in the school as a reliable, hard working, student-oriented teacher;
- Flexibility -- seen as someone who will design and/or try new strategies and approaches;
- Collaborative orientation -- interacts with everyone in a non-judgemental manner, and assumes that everyone has something to offer;
- Genuineness -- shows sincerity, gives honest praise and reinforcement;
- Trustworthiness -- delivers on promises;

- Empathic -- expresses concern and caring and identifies with the problem as well as the teacher, while validating the teacher's concerns and
- Communicator -- good listener, with positive, open, verbal and non-verbal approaches (Ride-Salt Teacher Support Teams 2006:4).

#### **2.4.4 Members of the TST**

The White Paper 6 (DOE, 2001) does not specifically identify who should be members of TST teams, but the Report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and the National Committee for Education Support Services (DoE, 1997) do give some direction in this regard. The Department of Education (2002) is of the opinion that the needs of the instruction and functioning of the TST will play a role in determining who are the best people to serve on this team. It suggested that the following people should make up the core members of this team:

- Educators with specialised skills and knowledge in areas such as learning support, life skills/guidance, and/or counselling;
- Educators from the school: they could be teachers who volunteer because of their personal interest;
- Educators who are involved directly in the management of the school;
- Educators on the staff who have particular expertise to offer around a specific need or challenge;
- Non-educators from the school. They may include administrative- and caretaking staff and
- Some learner representatives at Senior-, Further- or Higher Education levels.

The following members may be brought in additionally to assist with particular challenges:

- Parents and caregivers;
- Specific members of the district-based support team;
- Members of the community who have a particular contribution to make to specific challenges and

- Educators from other Educational Institutions.

## 2.5 COLLABORATION

Collaboration refers to working together, as a team (DoE, 2002). Collaboration is important for district-based support teams, which aim to provide holistic and comprehensive support to schools and other Education Institutions. A holistic approach, which acknowledges that all problems and development challenges are complex, requires bringing different perspectives of the problem into the solution. Particular expertise is not needed to address a complex challenge, it requires rather that each member needs to understand and engage with the full range of expertise available to understand and solve problems at hand (DoE, 2002). The goals of collaboration and that of the TST are closely linked to each other. Cook and Friend (1993) describe collaboration as a style of direct interaction between at least two co-equal parties, voluntarily engaged in shared problem solving, shared decision making, and shared resources, as they work towards a common goal. Sands, Kozleski and French (2000) strengthen the notion by stating that it is co-equal parties, as members, that bring their unique perspective, experiences, knowledge or skills, that work towards a common goal. They are also of the opinion that respect for diversity of experience and preferences is thus inherent in the definition of diversity.

Through collaboration the TST can reach high-quality outcomes, because all the members take responsibility and accountability for the outcomes. Collaboration creates opportunities for members to work together in a specific task. It develops and enhances knowledge and it ensures procedures for clarification of issues, brainstorming strategies, planning, implementation with facilitation and evaluation of outcomes. It also gives team members the opportunity to share, develop, refine, and/or adapt strategies through discussion and modelling. Collaboration provides a foundation of support for a teacher by helping him or her to develop specific, objective information regarding the nature of the problem (Ride-Salt Teacher Support Teams, 2006).

### 2.5.1 Qualities of collaboration

Professionals need the following qualities to be able to work together: they must realize that goals are often complex and that the success of achieving these goals requires joint effort. They must recognize the creativity that occurs when people work together to solve common problems. TSTs must enjoy the social aspect of problem solving with others. They must recognize and value the benefits from working collaboratively. Members must be interested in reflecting on and changing their own practices (Vaughn, Bos and Schumm, 2000).

### 2.5.2 The role and responsibilities of different role players in the support system

<b>FAMILIES INTERESTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>SCHOOLS PERSONEL'S INTERESTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>COMMUNITY MEMBERS INTERESTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL COMMUNITIES</b>
<b>INTERESTS</b>	<b>INTERESTS</b>	<b>INTERESTS</b>
To improve their quality of life. To maintain family life. To make choices for themselves and their children. To control their environment. To provide security and safety for their children. To maintain productivity. To promote community participation and support for themselves and their children.	To be effective and productive professionally and personally. To maintain their own dignity, safety and security. To participate in a school community that fosters professional growth and development, tolerates their differences, limitations, capacities and needs. To initiate and sustain relationships with other professionals. To engage in life-long learning.	Pay tax Gain and maintain quality –of-life outcomes for themselves. To know that the schools are preparing young people to live independent lives and to become responsible.
<b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>
To provide in their children's needs and interests that allow for their own quality of life and the quality of life of their children. To interact with school professionals and to advocate for the needs and interests of their own children, as well as all children. To support the efforts of school professionals when those efforts have the intention of	They need to be responsible and productive. To share knowledge with others and offer support. To teach their students to make choices and allow real choice making among limited options. To teach children how to exert control over their environment in socially acceptable ways. To provide basic skills to earn a living and acquire housing,	To pay taxes that supports public schools. To support the efforts of school professionals who value quality of life as an outcome for all children – no matter what their disability, limitation, capacity, or need. To exercise opportunities for input and support of public schools and all children.

<p>increasing their children's quality of life or that of other children.</p> <p>To support school personnel in providing a secure, safe environment for their own children, as well as all children.</p> <p>To support their own children to becoming caring individuals who can interact with and support the learning and social needs of their schoolmates.</p> <p>To continue to grow and learn and engage in change.</p>	<p>clothing and food.</p> <p>To teach workplace skills (cooperative work, conflict management, communication).</p> <p>To teach skills for establishing and maintaining relationships.</p> <p>To provide normal environments and access to people with different capacities and limitations.</p> <p>To continually enhance their understanding of themselves as learners, to self-assess strengths and weaknesses, to engage in change, and to gain new information.</p>	
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**Interests and responsibilities of families, school and communities in inclusive schools. Source: Sands, Kozleski and French, 2000.**

An inclusive school community is one where all stake holders (community members, youth, children and families) participate in important decisions along with school professionals and support personnel. It is important to distinguish between school professionals and support personnel. Sands et al (2000) make a clear distinction between the two concepts. The school professionals are: special education teachers, classroom teachers, the principal, social workers, speech language therapists, subject advisors, learning specialists, counsellors, school psychologists, school nurses, physical therapists and occupational therapists. Teacher support teams can be seen as a change agent that gives new perspective and insight in supporting learners with barriers to learning.

## 2.6 BARRIERS TO LEARNING

### 2.6.1 Definition

Barriers to learning and development are defined as “those factors which lead to the inability of the system to accommodate diversity, which lead to learning breakdown or which prevent learners accessing educational provision” (DoE, 1997).

The Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and the Committee for Education Support Services have identified the following barriers to learning and development in the South African context:

- Socio-economic deprivation, including poverty, lack of access to basic services, exposure to danger, inaccessible environments and unsafe buildings.
- Barriers arising from impairments, including physical, cognitive, sensory, developmental and learning impairments.
- Negative attitudes to and stereotyping of differences.
- Inflexibility in the curriculum and in educator training so that the diversity of learning needs is not adequately addressed.
- Inaccessible or unsafe schooling environments.
- Lack of recognition of the important role that the parents can play in supporting the teaching/learning process.
- Inadequate provision of support services to schools.
- Language and communication blocks in the curriculum, in the medium of instruction and in the teaching process.
- Disabilities and learning impairments that require specific support.
- Inadequate policies and legislation (Landsberg, 2005; Donald et al., 2002).

### **2.6.2 Intrinsic and extrinsic barriers**

From a systemic approach, factors that can create barriers may be located within the school, within the learner, within the educational system and/or within the broad socio-economic and political context. These barriers are referred to as intrinsic barriers and extrinsic barriers. Intrinsic barriers are those barriers situated within the individual, for example a visual or hearing impairment. Extrinsic barriers are those barriers situated in the environment and outside or “external” to the individual, for example poverty (Landsberg 2005).

### **2.6.2.1 Intrinsic Barriers**

- **Learning Barriers - Communication**

Language proficiency, Expressive language, Receptive language, Communication.

- **Behaviour Barriers**

Social environment, Socio-emotional restrictions.

- **Physical Barriers**

Disabilities affecting movement or use of limbs, Sensory barriers - visual or hearing disabilities, neurological barriers - brain lesions, damage or dysfunction such as cerebral palsy, spina bifida and epilepsy.

### **2.6.2.2 Extrinsic Barriers**

- **Extrinsic Barriers that Affect Individual Learners:**

Family dynamics, Transport needs, Socio- economic factors.

- **Extrinsic Barriers in Schools:**

Readiness for inclusion, human rights and school ethos, Policies, Staffing and staff development (Landsberg, 2005).

### **2.6.3 Contextual Barriers**

The main focus of support is to make the system more supportive for the individual learner needs. This will enable all learners to take part in the school activities and have access to the curriculum. Some of the contextual barriers around the delivery of support programmes are:

- Socio-economic conditions of the majority of learners
- Attitudes to difference
- Culture of the school regarding certain stereotypes
- Flexibility of the curriculum/learning programmes

- Appropriateness of communication
- Accessibility and safety of the built environment
- Availability of support from the school/district
- Recognition/involvement of parents
- Capacity amongst educators
- Capacity amongst senior management
- General functionality of the school
- Availability of assistive devices
- Availability of learning support materials/resources
- Violence or abuse (DoE, 2005).

The role and functions of the TST and DBST in the whole system have to be clearly outlined. This will give the TST a clear outline at which level they can support and assist learners and at which level they must refer learners. This must also involve training (DoE, 2002). The following indicators can be used to determine the intensity of support that is needed.

#### **2.6.4 Addressing barriers to learning**

The South African Department of Education has two main mechanisms in place to address the range of barriers to learning that the learners are facing. These two mechanisms are:

1. The ongoing assessment of support and provision is identified for learners who never entered school, who enter school late or who are considered to be over-age and are stuck in the General Education Training (GET) band with no support and a small chance of progressing to the Further Education Training (FET) band. The nature of support that has been identified for the learners' needs are:
  - Facilitation of admission to schools/resource centres
  - Programme Development -- fast tracking guidelines, etc.
  - Psycho-social support
  - Assessing the level of education



- Preparing the teacher of the relevant grade
  - Suggesting alternative placement within schools
  - Developing certification opportunities
  - Investigating ABET opportunities
  - Curriculum adaptation
  - Taking all steps to prevent dropout from the system
  - Inter-sectoral collaboration between Education, Social Development, Labour, Justice and SAPS (DoE, 2002).
2. The effectiveness of the support for learners must be reviewed and all the stakeholders who are involved must form part of the reviewing process.
- To move away from assessing the intrinsic barriers of the learner without making a thorough investigation of contextual factors, which impact on teaching and learning – this includes the pedagogy of the teacher.
  - Central role of the learner, parent and teacher in the planning and decision making around support.
  - To develop an eligibility- rather than a placement model.
  - Screening, identification and assessment are ongoing and integral to teaching and learning.
  - Assessment for classification is limited and only done when additional resources in the form of training, consultation, specialized services and material resources are required.
  - Internal-sartorial collaboration of all departments and agencies are the key to the strategy.
  - Reviewing the role of professionals to provide individual learner support or not even necessarily being part of the decision making process.
  - First exhaust all support mechanisms available at school and community level before looking beyond the school.
  - The nature of support will be in the programmes, with set time frames which will be reviewed regularly to determine their effectiveness and appropriateness.
  - Support programmes would be mainly curriculum adaptations.

- Procedures will always involve three sections: 1.what does the school have; 2. what do they need; 3. should the support needed be in an alternative milieu?
- Assessment for support will be teacher-driven and curriculum-based as far as possible, moving away from an over-reliance on professionals (DoE, 2005).

## **2.7 SUPPORT**

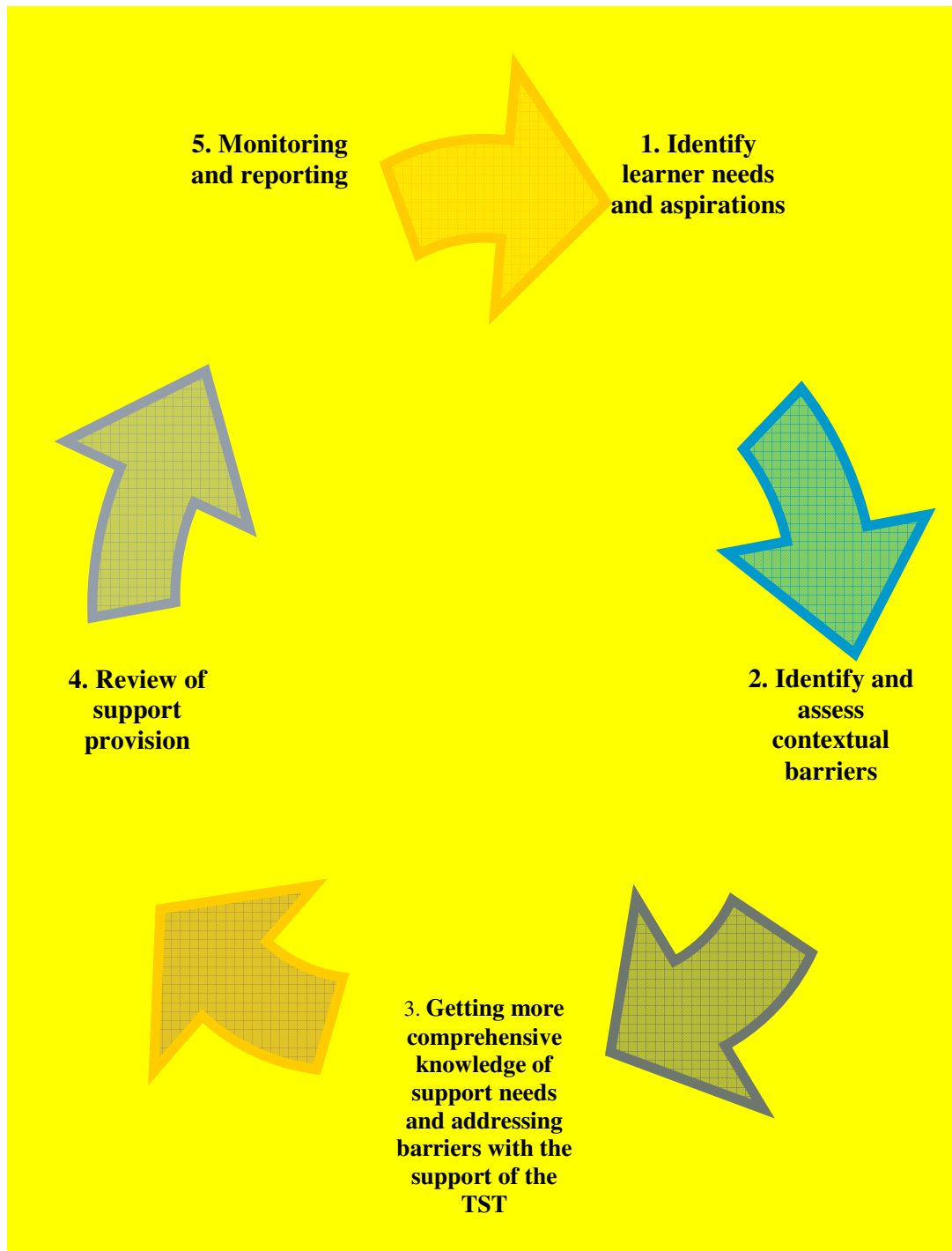
### **2.7.1 Definition**

To support is to help or encourage somebody by showing that you agree with them. It is to give or be ready to give help to somebody if they need it (Hornby 2000). Landsberg (2005) views support as the way in which people (educators) encourage and assist each other.

### 2.7.2 Indicators to determine the intensity of support needed (Department of Education, 2005)

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5
<p>1. Full participation</p> <p>2. No requirement for additional learning and teaching support.</p> <p>3. No additional adaptation required</p>	<p>1. Modified full participation.</p> <p>2. Requires some additional support to maximise learning outcomes.</p> <p>3. Adaptation planned and managed at the grade or phase level.</p>	<p>1. Participation in all aspects with occasional assistance.</p> <p>2. Requires additional support in a number of areas to maximise learning outcomes.</p> <p>3. Adaptation planned and managed with intervention of the TST</p>	<p>1. Participation in only some activities.</p> <p>2. Requires additional specialised support in many areas including ongoing monitoring to facilitate participation and to maximise learning.</p> <p>3. Adaptation planned and managed with assistance by DBST.</p>	<p>1. Participation extremely limited in certain areas.</p> <p>2. Requires specialised learning programme planning and/or high level of support.</p> <p>3. Adaptation and continuous monitoring needed in all the areas.</p>

### 2.7.3 The flow chart for reviewable additional support provision (Department of Education, 2005)



## 2.8 CONCLUSION

Preventing learners from dropping out of school is a difficult task and it needs a multi-disciplinary prevention and intervention strategy to address it effectively. Early identification of learners, who are at risk of dropping out of school, is important to ensure appropriate support and intervention. The success of any Dropout Prevention Programme can be determined by the context in which the support and intervention as well as monitoring took place. It also illustrates that the social factors that lead to dropout need to be addressed in the context in which the learner is experiencing it. Considering the social vulnerability of young people in South Africa, the eco-systemic perspective theory gives an opportunity to address the learner's needs in the context within which it arises. The school, as a system, has a responsibility to support learners who are at risk of dropping out. The systems need to function as a whole, to build resilience in learners and to ensure that they reach their maximum potential.

Teachers must be aware of their learners who are at risk of dropping out of school. Most of the time learners give indicators to teachers that they need help or support. These indicators are: When an A-grade learner's marks drop or he/she fails, when learners walk away from school with no anger or incident report, when a learner acts explosively in a new school situation, when learners play truant, when learners are guilty of substance abuse. Through teacher awareness, the TST can be alerted in giving support and assistance where needed.

The functionality of an effective TST depends on the existence of collaboration as a model of interaction between role-players. Its survival depends on a real team, compiled of a group of regular educators, who can rely on each other and learn from one another. The TST uses a systematic problem solving process to address barriers to learning and make the curriculum flexible for learning. Providing support to learners is one way of attempting to make learning contexts and lessons accessible to all learners. Support is also given when a school reviews its cultures, policies and

practises to determine support for the individual educator, parent and learner needs. Support is provided when educators plan lessons in such a way that they accommodate all learners. All staff members must be involved in support activities. This will lead to effective support that will focus on the learning and teaching process by identifying and addressing learner, educators and institutional needs.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

# **RESEARCH METHODS**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This research study was based within a qualitative research framework with an interpretative approach. This particular process enabled the researcher to gain insight on how the TST of a High School renders support to learners and also how the educators felt about the support provided to the learners. The research process also allowed for understanding of how the learners experienced the support that was given to them prior to dropping out of school. The research questions and sub-aims remained the area of interest throughout this entire research process.

The research journey was characterised by the process of becoming familiar with theory, whilst simultaneously being involved and interacting in the research process. This research process enabled the researcher to be focused and gave her the opportunity to feel at ease with what was expected of her as a researcher. It also clarified some of the unanswered questions regarding the meaning attached by both educators and learners to the support giving and receiving process.

The above mentioned experience of support will determine the impact that it has on the learners who are at risk of dropping out of school or who are facing barriers to learning. Kennedy and Morton (1999:69) are of the opinion that quantitative data loses sight of the individual reasons why learners drop out of school. They see each dropping out of an individual as a unique set of circumstances. This explains the rationale behind the researcher's choice of a qualitative study.

The researcher will endeavour to give an in-depth description of the empirical process of this study.

### **3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research questions and research aims are closely related as indicated in chapters 1, 1.4 and 1.5.

### **3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

A paradigm is a world view that includes certain philosophical assumptions about the nature of knowledge (Mertens and McLaughlin 2004:3). Maxwell (2005:36) refers to Thomas Kuhn's definition as a set of very general philosophical assumptions about the nature of the world (ontology) and how we can understand it (epistemology); assumptions that tend to be shared by researchers working in a specific field or tradition. This means that the research paradigm governs the process and the end product of the research (Johns, 2004:51). This research will be presented in an interpretive /constructivist paradigm with the aim of contextualising the study within the qualitative paradigm.

Qualitative research is an approach to research that uses methodologies designed to provide a rich, contextualized picture of an educational or social phenomenon (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The researcher was given an opportunity to understand situations in their uniqueness (the learners' experience of support) as part of a particular context (the school) and interactions within the context under study (the TST) (Adams, Colliar, Oswald, Perold, 2004:365). Merriam and Associates (2002:37) support the notion of interaction by stating that "one of the characteristics of qualitative research is that individuals construct meaning as they interact with their social worlds". Babbie and Mouton (2001:270) support the notion of understanding by stating that "the primary goal of studies using this approach is defined as describing and understanding rather than explaining human behaviour".

Qualitative Research is interested in the practical accomplishment of meaning and its relation to its social actions (Grubruim and Holstein, 2005:483). This



study is about studying people and their behaviour. It is about how they understand their world and how they are making meaning out of that which happens to them. It gave the researcher an opportunity to seek and discover the meaning that participants attach to their behaviour.

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Mertens and McLaughlin (2004:3) describe the interpretive/constructivist approach as contextual, experiential, involved, socially relevant, multi-methodological and inclusive of emotions and events as experienced. These aspects guided the researcher in the interpretation and understanding of the experiences of learners and the perceptions of teachers, rather than explaining and predicting it (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:643; Mertens and McLaughlin, 2004). Denzin et al. (2000) are of the opinion that this design offers opportunities to the researcher on explanations regarding how certain conditions come into existence and why they persist. It also furnishes the basis for realistic proposals concerning the improvement or removal of certain events or problems.

Mertens (2004) identifies three characteristics that guide the basic interpretative qualitative research design. These include the fact that reality is created as a result of a process of social construction. In this research, “reality” can be described as the support that was needed and the “process of social construction” can be described as the experience of support given and received. Secondly, it assumes that the inquirer and inquired-into are interlocked, each affecting the other throughout the process of their mutual interaction. This can be described as the interaction between the role players involved as well as the type of intervention given and received. Thirdly, it postulates that facts are products of social construct; therefore, the values surrounding any statement of “facts” must be explored and made explicit. In this research, it can be referred to as the experience of the learner as well as that of the teacher. Grubruim et al. (2005:484) support the above by stating that it engages both the how and the what of social reality; and it is centred in both how people methodically construct their experiences and their worlds.

The type of research design must be able to add value to the research process. Denzin et al. (2000) identified five different ways in which the interpretive design can contribute to research. These include the facts that:

1. It can help researchers to identify different definitions of the problem;
2. Through an interpretive approach by which researchers can locate the assumptions that are held by various interested parties;
3. Researchers can use this approach to identify strategic points of Intervention into social situations;
4. An Interpretive Approach makes it possible for researchers to suggest “alternative moral points of view from, which the problem” may be interpreted and assessed and
5. Researchers can expose the limits of statistics and statistical evaluations by using the more qualitative materials furnished by the interpretive approach.

Through the interpretive approach the researcher was able to get a clear understanding of the experiences of the participants and how they constructed these experiences in their own world. According to Merriam (2002), meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world that they are interpreting. The researcher was therefore able to understand how the teachers and learners interpret their experience, how they constructed their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences.

It also offers explanations on how certain conditions come into existence and why they persist and provide the basis for realistic proposals concerning the improvement or removal of certain events and problems in the support of the TST (Denzin et al., 2000). The authors emphasise the belief that we as a society must grasp, understand and interpret the perspectives and experiences of those persons who are served by applied programs correctly, if we are to create solid and effective programs.

## **3.5 METHODOLOGY**

### **3.5.1 Participants**

#### **3.5.1.1 *Sampling***

The TST of a high school and the learners who dropped out of this same school, were used as participants. The high school is situated in the Western Cape Province, in the East Metropole area. It serves a learner population of one thousand one hundred and thirty learners. It has a teaching staff of 30 teachers. The school is surrounded by sub-economic houses, informal settlements and middle class housing. Purposive sampling was used for the research, because it was convenient for the researcher in terms of time. By using purposive sampling the researcher was able to include participants according to the relevant criteria based on the emerging research questions (Mertens and McLaughlin, 2004:14).

The criteria for the TST members were:

1. The teacher must be part of a specific sub-group or co-ordinator of the sub-group;
2. He/she must be actively involved in the group; and
3. The member must have been part of the learners supporting intervention programme of the specific learner who had dropped out of school.

The criteria for the learners were:

1. They must have been referred to the TST for support and
2. They must have dropped out of school for not longer than 2 years.
3. The TST members were interviewed according to their involvement in the support structure. The learners, who had dropped out, were interviewed to get more insight into their experiences of support by the TST.

Because most studies into school dropouts are collected by school authorities, Kennedy and Morton (1999:69) argue that it is important to find out from learners themselves why they dropped out of school. The student voice provides insight from a different perspective to that of the educator. The

researcher made use of The Western Cape Education Department's Centralised Education Management Information System (CEMIS) address lists to track down the learners who had dropped out.

### ***3.5.1.2 Characteristics of participants***

For the purpose of this study the participants consisted of members of the TST of a High School, and learners who had dropped out of the same High School.

### ***3.5.1.3 The Teacher Support Team***

The Teacher Support Team (TST) is divided into smaller groups, according to the needs of the school. Every group has a coordinator which ensures that the group meets on a regular basis, that referrals are taken care of and that the needs of the learners are met. One of the educators who is the Head of Department is the coordinator of the TST. The TST group coordinators were interviewed in the form of a focus group. There were five group coordinators. One was a male educator and four were female educators. Two of the coordinators are in senior positions, the rest are post Level One educators. Four of the five teachers have more than ten years teaching experience. Two of the five are involved in extra mural activities. The sub-groups are divided into: HIV/AIDS, trauma, discipline, learning needs and substance abuse. The group coordinator is also responsible for sending a monthly report to the TST co-ordinator. The TST must make sure that referrals have been made to the District Support Team. The researcher will give a brief summary of each sub-group's area of concern.

### ***3.5.1.4 The sub-groups and their areas of concern***

The TST of the High School is divided into different sub-groups according to the needs of the school. The needs of the school were determined by the teachers of the school. The TST is divided into five groups. They are the

trauma, learning support, discipline, HIV/Aids and drug abuse groups. These groups are responsible for different needs, such as:

1. **Trauma** -- death, rape, molestation, pregnancy, blackmail, and feeding (malnutrition)
2. **Learning barriers** -- reading, writing, concentration, mathematics
3. **Discipline problems** -- discipline, attitudes, fighting, assault, truancy
4. **HIV/Aids** -- counselling for learners who are HIV/Positive or affected
5. **Drugs** -- alcohol, dagga, methamphetamine, LSD and any form of drugs

### ***3.5.1.5 Learners who dropped out of school***

Only learners who dropped out of school in the last 24 months (2007) were interviewed. Males as well as females between the ages of 14-18 years were part of the study. The participants dropped out of school in gr.8, 9, 10 or 11. Only those who lived in the surrounding areas of the school were tracked down and asked to take part in the research. Most of the learners, that were interviewed, come from the sub-economic area. Only one was from the informal settlement.

## **3.5.2 Methods of data collection**

### ***3.5.2.1 Data collection***

The researcher was the primary instrument of data collection in this research. A number of methods were used to collect the data for this study. These are: Interviews with TST and learners who dropped out of school, documents such as class registers, address lists, discipline reports and the reports of other educators as well as the Centralised Education Management System (CEMIS).

### ***3.5.2.2 Interviews***

The aim of an interview is to understand how people experience and make sense of their lives (Merriam, 2002). Interviews are suited to examining topics

in which different levels of meaning need to be explored (King, 2004:21). The interviews made it possible for the researcher to give an opportunity to participants to reflect and make meaning of their experiences that they have encountered. It gave the participants an indication that their stories were important. It was a powerful way to gain insight into educational issues, through understanding the experience of the participants involved in the research (Seidman, 1998).

The researcher made use of face to face semi-structured interviews for the learners who dropped out of school (Addendum C). Some of the learners worked and they were only available after work. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher some freedom in how questions are asked and in what order. All interviewees were asked the same basic questions. A degree of comparability across interviews was gained by standardizing the interviews (Shank, 2006:50).

I have chosen this type of interviewing method because it enabled me to hear the learners' understanding of the questions and I was able to probe where it was needed. My presence decreased the number of "don't know" and "no comment" answers (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:250).

The interviews were done in the interviewee's first language which was Afrikaans. Babbie and Mouton (2001:25) emphasise the importance of speaking the home language of the participant as essential.

Focus group discussions are useful for stimulating discussion. The method allows people to react to each other, encouraging debate, and giving a range of ideas and suggestions (The Open University, 2001:173). It is a useful way for getting at complex underlying notions in a setting where the sharing of experiences can help guide the other participants to greater awareness and participation (Shank 2006:48).

Focus group discussions were used to determine the TST perceptions of support given to learners who dropped out of school. It was a way of saving

time for teachers. The questions for the interviews were piloted on learners and educators to ensure that it was relevant and that the participants would be able to answer the questions. All the interviews were tape recorded and were then fully or partially transcribed by the researcher.

Meetings were held with the TST coordinators after school in one of the coordinator's classrooms. Three group discussions were held. The first meeting was to inform the sub-group coordinators about the research and the other two meetings were for the questions that needed to be answered. Individual interviews were held with two teachers, because they could not attend the last meeting due to unforeseen circumstances.

The focus group discussion was used to determine the TSTs perception of support. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, Delport (2005) define focus groups as group discussions which explore a specific set of issues that involve some kind of collective activity. They believe that focus groups are ideal for exploring people's experience. In this case I refer to this "experience" as the experience of the support giving process by the TST. The focus groups also enabled the researcher to examine the different opinions and perspectives of the teachers as they participated in the discussions (Addendum B).

### **3.5.2.3 Documents**

Documents can be used to trace a history of some current status. It includes memorandums, reports, plans, individual evaluation meetings and plans (IEP), discipline records, test scores, etc. (Mertens et al., 2004:104). Through the study of documents the qualitative researcher gets an opportunity to investigate people, events and systems in depth by analysing authentic written material (De Vos et al., 2005:325).

The strength of documents, as data source, lies with the fact that they already exist in the situation, where they do not intrude upon or alter the setting in ways that the presence of the investigator might (Merriam, 2002:13). The researcher studied the following documents to determine a pattern in the

learners' behaviour (De Vos et al., 2005:318) of school attendance and progress: the previous year's class registers were used to determine learners' school attendance; discipline and other reports were used to verify information from learners as well as that of teachers; the daily attendance class roster for each period (where the subject teacher needs to sign after every period); reports of grade heads and other teachers; and the Centralised Education Management Information System (CEMIS). CEMIS is an electronic system that the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) adopted. It is also an attempt to improve efficiency and the quality of education in the Province. The system enables the WCED to study learners' profiles and determine why they have dropped out of school (Witbooi, 2006). The researcher compared the information received from the learner with the above mentioned relevant documents. By using the above strategy, the researcher tested the validity and reliability of data and the researcher also interviewed the grade heads and class teachers.

### **3.5.3 Data analysis**

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of data collection (De Vos et al., 2005:333). Shank (2006:225) refers to it as data grading, which can be defined as a system that serves as a model for the discovery and understanding of the process. Merriam et al. (2002:14) view it as an inductive strategy which starts with a unit.

The interviews were transcribed on the day of or the day after each session. This meant that the conversations remained fresh in the researcher's memory and although it was time consuming, the transcribing did not become an impossible task. The simultaneous collection of data and analysing allowed me to make adjustments along the way and also enabled me to "test" emerging concepts, themes, and categories against the subsequent data (Merriam et al., 2002:14). It also empowered me to build a coherent interpretation of the data that was collected and it provided an opportunity for me as a researcher to get immersed in the data and generate insight into it (De Vos et al., 2005:335).



Reading plays a very important part in analysing data and it forced the researcher to become familiar with the data (De Vos et al., 2005:337). The data was classified through coding into categories and themes after the transcribing and reading process. De Vos et al. (2005:338) describe classifying as taking the qualitative information apart and looking for categories, themes or dimensions of information. Marshall and Rossman (1995:154) view the above process as the most difficult, complex, ambiguous, creative and enjoyable phase of analysing. Coding represents the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualised and put back together in new ways. It is the central process by which theories are built from data (De Vos, 2005:340). Radnor (2002:69) explains that analysing semi-structured interviews entails close examination of the data collected in order to find an answer to your research question and after the analysis you go a step further and interpret the findings.

The researcher summarised and interpreted the data in the research report by comparing it to existing data from the literature review. Finally the data was presented in form of tables (De Vos et al., 2002:339-344).

The following acronyms have been used for the groups and during the coding process.

***TST GROUP***

DR – Drugs

DS – Discipline

TR – Trauma

LS – Learning Support

HIV – HIV/ Aids

### **3.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

#### **3.6.1 Methods of data verification**

De Vos et al. (2005:345-347) are of the opinion that every research must answer to the norms that stand as criteria against the trustworthiness against

which a project can be evaluated. These norms are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These norms establish the “true value” of the study in relation to its applicability, consistency and neutrality (De Vos et al., 2002:351).

### **3.6.1.1 Credibility**

The goal of credibility is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the participants' views were accurately identified and described (De Vos et al., 2005:346). The researcher made use of various interviewing techniques during the interviews, for example probing, verbal and non-verbal expressions, re-stating and summarising. The interview questions (**Addendum B** for educators and **Addendum C** for learners who dropped out of school) were piloted before the researcher did the interviews. The researcher triangulated the data to enhance the credibility of it.

### **3.6.1.2 Transferability**

A qualitative study's transferability is the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts and settings or to other groups (De Vos et al. 2002:356). Shank (2006:115) views it as the use of adequate and detailed description in laying out all the relevant details of the research process. In order to achieve transferability, the researcher engaged in a thick description of the research methodology.

### **3.6.1.3 Dependability**

Dependability refers to the ability to know where the data, in a given study, comes from and how it was collected (Shank, 2006:114). The researcher gathered the data from the co-ordinator of the TST, the group coordinators of the TST (**Addendum D**), the class teachers, subject teachers, and learners, who had dropped out of school (**Addendum E**). De Vos et al. (2002:351) view it as an alternative to reliability in quantitative research, in which the researcher attempts to justify changing conditions in the occurrence chosen

for the study, as well as changes in the design created by an increasingly refined understanding of the setting.

The data that the researcher used is triangulated by the different types of data and data gathering strategies that were used during the research (Shank, 2006:113). Willis (2007) views triangulation as the finding of multiple sources of confirmation when you need to draw a conclusion. Maxwell (2005:112) refers to it as collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods. Accordingly, validity was given to the data, which had been gathered, through the process of triangulation.

#### **3.6.1.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability deals with the details of the methodologies used (Shank 2006:115). De Vos et al. (2005:346) refer to it as the traditional concept of objectivity. The above authors stress the need to ask whether the findings of the study could be confirmed by another study, so different resources were used to build the literature review and the research.

### **3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethics is a set of moral principles that are suggested by an individual or group, that are subsequently widely accepted and that offer rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and participants, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students (De Vos et al., 2002:351). The Webster New World Dictionary defines ethical as: “conforming to the standards of conduct of a given profession or group” (in Babbie and Mouton 2002:50). In agreement with the above statements, the following ethical conditions were relevant to be considered in conducting this study:

The researcher applied to the WCED to do research in the High School (**Addendum F**). Permission was granted to the researcher by the WCED. The researcher then approached the principal and informed him about the

research and the permission of WCED. The researcher had a meeting with the TST co-ordinator and the group co-ordinators of the TST to inform them about the research that would be done. The researcher asked for voluntary participation. A meeting was scheduled for those co-ordinators who had given an indication that they would participate in the research. Meetings were held in the form of focus group- and individual interviews. Confidentiality forms and consent forms were signed by participants (**Addendum G**). The researcher approached learners who had dropped out of school at their homes, in the streets and in shops, where ever she could find them and had a discussion with them about the research. Only the learners who said they would take part were interviewed. Permission forms were given to parents (**Addendum H**).

### **3.7.1 Informed consent**

The researcher ensured that the participants were competent to give informed consent; i.e. they were in a sound state of mind to make independent decisions. Participants were provided with sufficient information about the study to allow them to decide for or against participation. Informed consent forms were given to participants once they had been provided with all the information regarding the research and expressed their willingness to voluntarily participate in the research. The researcher provided every learner with a letter to show their parents and/or guardian that the research was for study purposes. Permission of parents was requested for participants under the age of 18 years.

### **3.7.2 Confidentiality**

Learners and teachers were assured of confidentiality during this study. Confidentiality forms were given to teachers to ensure that every discussion that took place was confidential. The researcher went to learners who had dropped out as a friend. This was done to have no specific authority over the participants because the researcher wanted to establish a positive relationship with all participants (Mertens, 1997:179).

### **3.8 LIMITATIONS**

The study had several limitations. These limitations related to the availability of learners and educators and their willingness to share openly. The study was done in one High School. Only the group coordinators of the TST were interviewed, which limited the amount of information and experiences from participants.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

# **FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study focused on the experiences of the TST and learners who had dropped out of High School. The focus group discussions with the TST, interviews with the learners and the scrutinising of documents, shaped the focus of this study. It revealed the experiences of support received by learners as well as the process of support given by the TST. The researcher experienced her role in this study as complex in terms of my involvement in the TST as well as the relationship that I had with some learners who had dropped out of school. I was their class teacher and subject teacher.

The missing voices in this study should be identified as the parents and other teachers in the TST sub-groups. This was an area that the researcher could not follow through, because of the amount of data and the limited focus of this research to the TST and learners who dropped out of school. Further study could be done on how parents experienced the support from the school.

Recommendations are made in relation to the need for training of teachers, as well as an awareness of support necessary to strengthen the support systems for learners. These recommendations have been done in the form of a schools-based TST operational manual (Addendum I). This manual gives guidelines to the TST on how to structure themselves in order to render support to learners. The interviews and focus group discussions were done in Afrikaans. The responses of the participants were also in Afrikaans and it was then translated into English. The Afrikaans that the participants used was not the “normal standard” Afrikaans, it is slang Afrikaans that is unique to them. The researcher used their direct words as it was spoken during the interview.

## 4.2 THEMES

The themes have been tabled in relation with the focused group discussions and interviews with learners. These themes are discussed in detail in 4.3.1 and 4.3.2. The data was analysed and the following themes were identified:

<b>4.2.1 Themes of the TST</b> <i>Perceptions of support</i>	<b>4.2.2 Themes of learners who had dropped out</b> <i>Experiences of support</i>
Involvement of the school management team (SMT)	Leadership
Effective functioning of sub-groups	The transition from primary school to high school
The involvement of community based expertise and district based support teams (DBST)	Involvement of peers in supporting learners
Accommodation of learners' needs (barriers to learning)	Accommodation of learners' needs (barriers to learning)
The involvement of parents and learners in the support process,	Communication and conflict
Lack of collaboration between colleagues	
Lack of collaboration between the school and community based expertise	Reasons for dropping out of high school
The lack of referral systems	
The referral of learners	
Support of parents	Support of parents
Needs of the subgroups	Needs of learners who have dropped out of school
Monitoring and evaluation	

## 4.3 FINDING AND DISCUSSION OF THEMES

### 4.3.1 Themes of the TST

#### 4.3.1.1 *Involvement of the school management team (SMT)*

The involvement of the SMT is a major concern for the sub group leaders in the TST. The TST is coordinated by one of the Heads of Department (HOD), whilst one of the Deputy Principals is the sub group coordinator. The principal and other SMT members are not actively involved in the TST. Two of the group members expressed their concern over the lack of involvement of the SMT as follows:

*T1: Die prinsipaal en die ander SMT lede moet ook betrokke raak, sodat hulle kan sien met watter uitdaging ons daaglik gekonfronteer word. Wat is hulle rol in die proses?* (The principal and other SMT members must get involved, they must see what challenges we are confronted with on a daily basis. What is their role in this process?)

*T5: Alles word op ons gedump. Die prinsipaal sal eienaarskap en verantwoordelikheid moet neem.* (Everything is dumped on us. The principal will have to take ownership and responsibility.)

The SMT should take the leading role in supporting the educators and learners at the school. This approach fosters an environment of support and demonstrates a shared commitment to addressing issues that impact on teaching and learning. The inclusion of the SMT will help bring the message across that the TST is an important and central school activity and that their involvement will enhance the lines of communication. This communication can be part of the report back to the principal in the SMT meetings as well as staff meetings. These reports will allow the SMT to identify and respond to potential problems early. This proactive approach will prevent further escalation of problems. It will enable the SMT to make informed decisions about staff training and ways to address certain problems in the curriculum, especially in the areas of numeracy and literacy. The involvement of the SMT members will



also enhance effective functioning of the sub-groups, and the staff will realise the importance of their role as educators in the supporting of learners. The SMT has the extra time (additional administration periods) to work through referrals quickly and to do follow up referrals where needed.

#### **4.3.1.2 Effective functioning of sub-groups**

The lack of involvement of the SMT has an impact on the effective functioning of the sub-groups. It was found that not all sub-groups were active or functioning. Most of the groups were not able to produce any minutes of their meetings. Only two of the five groups had files with some documentation in it. Sub-group coordinator one had a file with a policy document of WCED and a year planner in it. Sub-group coordinator five had a file with referrals and incident reports from educators (scrutinising of documents, 2006). Most of the sub-groups met inconsistently whilst others did not have meetings at all. One of the sub-group members could not provide information on the size of the group and which educators were represented on this group. Three members view their opinion as follows:

**T3:** *Daar was nog geen vergaderings so ver vir die jaar gehou nie. Ek weet nie eers wie almal betrokke is nie, en hoe groot die groep werklik is nie. Ek weet nie wie is die ander kollegas wat ons ook moet bystaan nie* (There have been no meetings for this year thus far. I don't know who all the involved educators are and how big the group actually is. I don't know who the other educators are that should support us).

**T2:** *Vanaf April, het ons nog nie weer vergader nie* (Since April, we have not had a meeting).

**T5:** *Gereelde vergaderings word gehou met die Beheerliggaam, maar die groep vergader nie gereeld nie* (Regular meetings are held with the Governing Body, but not with the group).

It is imperative that all sub-groups of the TST meet on a regular basis. This will create opportunities where information can be shared and certain challenges, that the groups are facing, can be addressed. These meetings must determine the roles and responsibilities of each educator and set guidelines for interventions. By meeting regularly, the sub-groups act as an early warning system, which can alert the TST, on trends and potential problems. The needs of learners will therefore be addressed as soon as possible and it will enhance teamwork.

The school needs to adopt an Inclusive Education Policy, where change and restructuring (Swart and Pettipher, 2007) are the focus points. This policy must ensure that all educators, SMT members, and other stakeholders share the notion that the needs of all learners are important and need to be addressed and met where possible.

#### **4.3.1.3 Lack of collaboration between colleagues**

The effective functioning of the sub-groups may have an influence on how well the educators will work together as a team because the primary aim of the TST is that educators must work together as a team. In this particular TST structure, which I met with, the sub-group coordinator and the TST coordinator do most of the work. The lack of collaboration between group members clearly had an impact on the support that was given to the learners. This lack of collaboration always impacts on communication, which in turn impacts on the type of support that learners receive. Three of the group members were concerned about the team work of the colleagues.

**T3:** *Slegs een opvoeder uit die groep het probeer om met 'n leerder te werk uit 'n vakopvoeder se agtergrond* (Only one teacher out of the group tried to work with the learner from a subject teacher's background).

**T4:** *Die betrokkenheid van ander lede kan verbeter - op die oomblik doen slegs die groep koördineerder verwysings en ondersteuning.* (The

involvement of other educators can improve. At the moment only the coordinator is doing the referrals and the support).

**T5:** *Samewerking van kollegas, is 'n groot probleem* (Collaboration of colleagues is a big problem).

Collaboration and consultation are important aspects of preparation for an Inclusive Education System. Support challenges, at school level, include poor strategic planning on the part of the school and the district, resistance to change, unavailability of district personnel and perceived lack of commitment to a consultative approach (Stofile and Green, 2007). The focus of collaboration must be addressing of the learners' needs. However, to collaborate successfully teachers need to develop skills in problem solving, interpersonal communication, dealing with differences and managing themselves and their time (Landsberg, 2005).

#### **4.3.1.4 Lack of collaboration between the school and community based expertise**

The poor management of time, communication and interpersonal skills might lead to poor communication with other stakeholders. Some of the educators were very frustrated with some of the NGOs. They are of the opinion that they don't receive any reports from these NGOs. One of the educators expressed herself as follows:

**T1:** *Ons het geen verslae van PATCH(an organisation working with children and women who were sexually abused) ontvang rondom die leerder nie. Hulle het die leeder na BADISA(an welfare organisation in the community) verwys maar ons het ook nie verslae van hulle ontvang nie* (We did not receive any reports from PATCH. They referred the learner to BADISA but we have not received any reports from them either).

The failure to report back to schools can have an influence on the type of support the learner should receive, because the educator doesn't know the

outcome of the referrals that were made. Effective collaboration between role players will enhance sustainability across the different professions. Inter-sectoral collaboration is the key to the above mentioned problem.

#### **4.3.1.5 *Misconception of the teacher's ability to support learners***

Inter-sectoral collaboration will ensure that certain aspects are dealt with in the field of experts, when needed. Some educators are of the opinion that learners need to be referred when they are experiencing barriers to learning. They feel that only experts can address the barriers that learners are facing. The primary aim of the TST is to build capacity within the school, which will enable educators to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to address a range of needs.

**T3:** *Ons is nie opgelei om met sulke gevalle te werk nie. Die leerder moes alreeds in gr.8 vir sielkundige evaluerende verwys gewees het.* (We are not trained to work with these cases. The learner should have been referred for psychological evaluation in gr. 8.).

**Personeel bespreking (2006)** - *Meneer, ons het kundiges nodig om die leesprobleem aan te spreek. Ons kan dit nie doen nie.* Staff discussion (2006)  
– Sir, we must get experts in to address the reading problem of our learners. We cannot do it).

Teachers in mainstream classrooms have to “accept the fact that it is no longer desirable or acceptable to refer learners, who are experiencing barriers, for expert help elsewhere” (Jonson and Green, 2007). Teachers experience the teaching of learners with diverse education needs as difficult and unrewarding and they believe that they are ill prepared to support such learners (Engelbrecht and Green, 2007). The success of inclusion in education depends to a great extent on the availability and quality of educational support that is offered in mainstream schools (Farrell, 2004). Whilst referral to appropriate support services are necessary at times,

educators must also ensure that learners are supported within the school context. This demonstrates the need for mutually beneficial partnerships that extend beyond the mere passing of responsibilities to others.

#### ***4.3.1.6 The involvement of community based expertise and the district based support team (DBST)***

Where beneficial partnerships are evident in the school support structure., the TST is strengthened by community based expertise such as PATCH (an NGO who works with survivors of sexual abuse and rape), BADISA (a local welfare organisation), Love Life (NGO), Girls and Boys Town, HOW (a Drug Rehabilitation Centre) and the local community health clinic. The DBST forms part of the support process, through staff training and by conducting psychological assessments. Four of the group members raised their opinion as follows:

***T1:*** *Die Onderwys Bestuur en Ondersteunings Span (OBOS) het 'n werkswinkel gehou oor trauma vir die hele personeel. PATCH was gekontak en 'n maatskaplike werkster het gekom (The District Based Support Team (DBST) held a workshop on trauma for the entire staff. PATCH was contacted and a social worker was sent).*

***T2:*** *Sy is deel van 'n plaaslike ondersteuningsprogram. Badisa (plaaslike maatskaplike dienste) was ingeroep. Opvoeders was by verskeie werksinkels wat by die OBOS aangebied was rondom HIV/VIGS. Vier opvoeders het 'n naweek werkswinkel oor HIV/VIGS bygewoon, dit was aangebied deur Love Life. Die leerder het berading ontvang by die plaaslike kliniek. (She is part of a local community support group. One of the teachers in the HIV/AIDS group attended a few workshops presented by the EMDC. Four of the educators attended a weekend workshop on HIV/AIDS presented by Love Life. The Learner received counselling at the local clinic.)*

***T4:*** *Die leerder was na rehab geneem vir toetsing (The learner was in rehabilitation for tests).*

**T5:** *Die dissiplinêre hoof het 'n kursus oor positiewe gedrag bygewoon, dit was aangebied deur Girls & Boys Town. Die leerder was na rehab geneem vir toetsing* (The discipline head attended a positive behaviour workshop presented by Girls & Boys Town. The learner was taken to a rehabilitation centre for tests).

Schools do not function in isolation, but are embedded within broader communities and a community-based approach can contribute to the development of inclusive learning communities (Engelbrecht and Green, 2007). It is good to see that some of the sub-groups made use of community expertise when needed. These partnerships strengthen the relationship between the school and the community and contribute to a culture of mutual support. Schools must ensure that they have a local directory of services available that draw on the expertise and resources of local organisations and partners.

#### **4.3.1.7 Accommodating learner needs (Barriers to learning)**

The availability of a local directory of services will ensure that learners can be referred to experts. Educators can draw on their services when assistance is needed. One of the teachers has adopted alternative strategies to accommodate learners who are facing barriers to learning in the classroom.

**T3:** *Ek het hom nooit voor die klas laat lees, altyd gedurende pouse of huis toe gaan tyd. Mondeling was ook na skool of huis toe gaan tyd gedoen* (I accommodated the learner to do his reading and oral after school or during break, but never in front of the class).

Some of the teachers were willing to adapt the curriculum to address the barriers that learners are facing in the school. They took the responsibility for the learning process by differentiating the curriculum for certain learners (Jonson and Green, 2007). Learners at school have a diverse range of needs that impact on their functioning at school. Inclusive schools proactively find

ways to accommodate learners' needs and involve parents in support programmes.

#### ***4.3.1.8 Involvement of parents and learners in the support processes***

Most parents are interested in their children's progress at school. They want to know how their children are doing and how they can be of help in their children's education. In reality many parents are working, have difficulty with transport and have other domestic responsibilities. It is therefore important that schools offer a range of opportunities for parents to gain insight into their children's progress and allow a space for parents to voice their concerns (Jonson and Green, 2007). Two members of the group have indicated that the parent and the child were involved in the process of support.

***T4:*** *Die leerder, ouer en koordineerder was betrokke* (The learner, parent and coordinator were involved).

***T5:*** *Daar was slegs in gesprek getree met die ouer rondom die leerder se gedrag. Die ouer was geskakel. Die leerder se mammië was gekontak.* (There was just a discussion with the parent regarding the learner's behaviour. The parent was called. The learner's mother was contacted).

Along with the democratic process in South Africa, there is rightfully an emphasis on parents and communities to be more involved in and have control over the development of their schools (DoE, 1996a). It is good to note that the involvement of parents went beyond the election onto school governing bodies and participation in parent-teacher meetings. Parents are notified when learners are facing barriers to learning or need special intervention. This type of communication makes it easy for the supporting process to be implemented. However there are no clear guidelines or instructions for parents on how to support these learners in their needs.

#### **4.3.1.9 Support of parents**

The lack of guidelines and instructions for parents created a misconception by educators that parents don't care. Two of the educators were not impressed with the support that the learners received from their parents. Educators are of the opinion that parents are not able or equipped to assist learners in the support process.

*T4: Die ouer se ingesteldheid was nie reg nie, sy het toegelaat dat die leerder vir haar sê wat om te doen (Bylae D). Die klasopvoeder het een oggend die ouer en ma na die rehab geneem. Ons het later verneem dat die ouer en leerder voor die rehab omgedraai het omdat die leerder aangegaan het en geskree het. Nie die ouma of ma het die sondae sessie vir ouers by die rehab bygewoon nie.* (The parents were not attuned to the learner's problem (Addendum D). She gave the learner freedom to tell her what to do. The class teacher took the parent and the learner to the rehab one morning. We were informed later that day that they did not enter the rehab, because the learner became hysterical).

*T1: Die ouer was nie bereid om van haarself te gee, ter wille van haar kind se veiligheid nie – laat haar vriend weer in huis toe nadat die maatskaplike werker hom verbied het* (The parent was not prepared to give up her own needs for her child's safety - she allowed her boyfriend back in the house, after he was prohibited by the social worker to go near the house).

As many South African studies have clearly indicated, support is vital for participation in general and in for learners and their families in particular (Engelbrecht, 2005). In a situation, where there is widespread poverty, support for parents needs to acknowledge the social and economic realities of their constituency and provide the kind of support that parents would like, such as providing their children with some food and clothing (Smit and Liebenberg, 2003). The type of support that come from parents need to be evaluated. Sometimes they put their own children more at risk with the



choices that they made. It is imperative that parents know their responsibilities in the supporting process of their children.

#### **4.3.1.10 Referral of learners**

Parents must be informed immediately when learners are referred to experts or when they are facing barriers to learning. Some of the teachers made sure that cases are dealt with quickly and that the learner receives support as soon as possible. Three of the group members shared their experience of referral as follows:

**T4:** *Die leerder was binne 48 uur verwys* (Learner was referred within 48 hours).

**T1:** *Die klasopvoeder het onmiddellik die saak onder die hoof se aandag gebring. Die leerder was binne een uur deur PATCH gehelp* (The class teacher informed the principal immediately. The learner received help from PATCH within one hour).

**T2:** *Die opvoeder het onmiddelik 'n afspraak gemaak by die naaste kliniek, sodat leerder berading kon ontvang* (The teacher made an appointment at the nearest clinic immediately for counselling for the learner).

This type of approach gives the impression to learners that their safety is important and that they are special and important. Although a clearly communicated referral structure is not in position, some educators ensure that cases are dealt with immediately.

#### **4.3.1.11 Lack of referral systems**

The lack of a clearly communicated structure is evident in how the referrals are dealt with. There is no formal structure on how the referrals should take place. Some teachers are doing their own referrals and hand it in directly to the TST coordinator. In most cases the referrals don't reach sub-group

coordinators. It is handled by individual educators. Four of the group members expressed their opinion as follows:

**T4:** *Daar moet 'n meer gestruktureerde stelsel wees om in te werk .* (There must be a more structured system to work in).

**T2:** *Die weeklikse vergaderings moet deel uitmaak van die skoolprogram, soos die dissipline vergaderings aangedui word op die jaarbeplanner.* (The weekly meetings must form part of the school's planning, like the discipline meetings that are indicated on the year planner).

**T5:** *Plaas opvoeders in regte portfolio's om in te werk* (Place educators in the right portfolios).

**T3:** *Slegs een opvoeder het met 'n leerder gewerk. Niemand volg op of die groep wel funksioneer nie. Die groep vergader nie gereeld nie. Dit is nie deel van die skool se beplanning nie* (Only one educator worked with a learner. Nobody follows up whether the group is functioning. The group does not meet on a regular basis. The meetings are not part of the school's planning).

The absence of a proper referral system may hamper the efficiency with which learners should be supported. Because of the lack of meetings, referrals are often made without consultation or discussion within the sub-groups. Group meetings must therefore preferably form part of the school's week-, month- and year planners. This will ensure that input is provided by the team members in the relevant sub-groups.

#### **4.3.1.12 The needs of sub-groups**

The analysis of the needs of sub-groups indicated that most co-ordinators identified that the lack of available time, proper training, fewer learners in a class and a code of conduct for subject educators, as well as class educators, have an impact on the support given to learners.

**T4:** *Tyd, opvoeders wat 'n passie het, ekstra periodes, minder kinders in 'n klas.* (Time. Educators who have a passion, extra periods, fewer learners per class).

**T3:** *Opleiding in die identifisering van leerprobleme, beleid oor die vakopvoeder en klasopvoeder se rolle in die ondersteuning van leerders, tyd, minder kinders in klasse.* (Training in the identification of learning difficulties, code of conduct for subject and class teachers' roles in supporting learners, time and smaller class groups).

**T1:** *Tyd. Terugvoering van dienste, verantwoordelikheid van ouers, betrokkenheid van bestuurspan, ondersteuning van kollegas* (Time, the report back of service delivery, the responsibility of parents, the involvement of SMT and the support of colleagues).

**T2:** *Tyd, opleiding van ander kollegas, betrokkenheid van skoolbestuurspan* (Time, training of other colleagues, involvement of the School Management Team).

**T5:** *Kollegas moet protokol volg, samewerking tussen rolspelers, tyd, gereelde vergaderings. Plaas opvoeders in die regte portfolio's* (Colleagues must adhere to protocol, time, regular meetings. Put educators in their right portfolios).

In South Africa teachers perform many different roles at schools. These roles include being a counsellor, minister, parent and social worker. The reality is that the majority of teachers in South Africa were never trained for these roles (Stofile and Green, 2007). Some of the other factors that have an impact on the ability of teachers to deliver effective support and teaching are class sizes, workload, physical layout of classrooms, learning support materials, equipment and administrative duties (DoE, 2002a). The dream, of addressing the needs of all learners, will never come true if teachers are unable to implement the curriculum effectively (Stofile and Green, 2007). It is important

that teachers need to be trained in the area where they are giving support and the involvement of the SMT needs to be addressed.

#### **4.3.1.13 Monitoring and evaluation**

The need for training and the involvement of the SMT can be evaluated through a monitoring and evaluation system. Monitoring and evaluation are an important process of any programme. None of the sub-groups monitored or evaluated any of the support processes that were given to learners.

**T1-T3:** *Niks was gedoen. (Nothing was done)*

**T4:** *Nee, geen monitering of evaluering het plaasgevind nie. (No monitoring or evaluation has been done).*

**T5:** *Nee, nie een van die twee prosesse was gedoen nie. (No monitoring or evaluation has been done).*

Monitoring and evaluation need to be regular and ongoing throughout all the phases of any change process. For evaluation to be effective it is important for everyone, children included, to be evaluators. Any evaluation agenda must be flexible and open and the result should be fed into continuous improvement and learning processes (Swart and Pettipher, 2007).

#### **4.3.2 Individual interviews with learners who dropped out of school**

In this section I will summarise the experiences of the learners who dropped out of school. The themes will be discussed as set out in 4.2.

#### **4.3.2.1 Leadership**

Leadership is the key to school improvement and change. A transformational leadership is required to ensure change in schools. The school principal must recognise his/her responsibility to set the tone of the school and help the school as a whole to become and maintain a supportive, caring community (Landsberg, 2005).

**Learner 1:** *Meneer. Y het my geklap toe gaan sê ek vir die hoof. Toe jaag hy my huistoe en hy het op my geskree. Hy het vir my gesê ek moet wegbly van sy skool af.* (Mr. Y had assaulted me. I went to inform the principal about it. He shouted at me and said I must go home. He told me I must stay away from his school).

The primary step in creating an inclusive school is to establish a shared vision of preferred conditions for the future. Any vision for an inclusive school needs to be based on the democratic, egalitarian principles of inclusion, belonging and provision of quality education to all learners (Landsberg, 2005).

#### **4.3.2.2 The transition from primary school to high school**

The vision of an inclusive school, as mentioned above, can ensure that learners will experience the transition from Primary School to High School as a positive process. The transition from Primary to High School can be a difficult experience for some learners. These experiences, if not identified early and managed appropriately, might put the learners at risk of dropping out of school.

**Learner 2:** *My juffrou het vir my gesê ek moet na juffrou X toe gaan. Ek was drie kee da by dai juffrou, ma elke kee as ek da ko was sy besag. Ek het na skool vir juffrou X gewag sy sou my geneem het, ma toe ek by ha klas kom was sy nie da nie. Ek het toe na juffrou Y toe gegaan wat my altyd help toe sê sy, sy sallie vi my kan help, sy het juffrou X gerêel om my te niem, ek moet ma da voor juffrou Y se klas vir ha gaan wag. Ek het lank da gewag, toe loep*

*ek ma huis toe. Ek het nie weer terug gegaan, want hulle is te besig na skool.* (My class teacher told me that I must go to teacher X, but every time when I went to teacher X, she was busy. I waited after school for Miss X to take me, but she was not there at her class. I went to miss. Y, who usually helps me, but she told me she had arranged with miss X to take me, I must wait there at her class. I waited in front of her class for a long time and after a while I went home. I did not go back, because they are too busy after school).

The transition from primary school to secondary school needs to be supported. Blamires and Moore (2004:79) are of the opinion that one of the reasons why learners, with a high level of emotional and behavioural difficulties, fail on the transfer to secondary school, is because they move to a less child-centred environment where a greater focus is on the curriculum, rather than differentiating for differing needs, leading to a deficit view of the learner. Additional stressors, which must also be taken into consideration, are changing classrooms, adjusting to new expectations and differing teacher styles.

#### **4.3.2.3 *The involvement of peers in supporting learners***

It is good when teachers narrow the support process down to people with whom the learner is comfortable and familiar. One of the learners informed the researcher that he was allowed to bring a friend with whilst reading.

**Learner 3:** *Ek kan altyd my vriend saamgebring het om my te help met die uitspraak van moeilike woorde* (I could always bring my friend along to help me with the pronunciation of difficult words).

Peers have demonstrated to be the most significant others in a child's life. They are important sources of self-esteem, particularly when self-referential statements shift from the absolute to the comparative (Phillips, 2005). Peer support programmes can be a useful strategy to support individual learners.

#### **4.3.2.4 Accommodating learners' needs (Barriers to learning)**

Teachers accommodated learners through the use of peer supporting. Some teachers have adopted strategies to accommodate learners in their classroom and have taken the responsibility to differentiate the curriculum for certain learners (Jonson and Green, 2007). Some however, have ignored the simple request of a learner to be moved to another class. Two of the learners reveal their experience as follows:

**Learner 3:** *Ek het altyd by juffou X na skool of in pouse tyd gelees. Ek kan altyd my vriend saam gebring het om my te help met die uitspraak van moeilike woorde. Mondeling was ook so gedoen. Juffrou Y het ook vir my gehelp. Sy het almal in die klas gehelp wat nie die werk lekke kan gedoen het nie. In al ha aktiwiteite kan jy of geskryf of geteken of prente geplak het. Jy kan besluit het, watter een jy wil doen. Ek het altyd daarvan gehou om te teken.* (I read to teacher X after school or during break. I was allowed to take my friend with who helped me to articulate difficult words. Oral was done in the same manner. Teacher Y also helped me. She helped everybody in the class who did not understand the work very well. In all her activities we had an option to write, draw or paste. You could decide which one you wanted to do. I always loved to draw).

**Learner 2:** *Hulle bly my saam met 'n klomp druipeling sit. Dan is ons 60 in 'n klas. Ek en my ma het vir Mnr.X gevra om my uit dai klas te haal, ma hulle willie dit gedoen het nie. Toe besluit ek ma ek los die skool. Wa kan jy, 60 in 'n klas. Dai kinnens lyster nooit vi die onderwyser. Hulle raas en gan te kere. Hulle steer hulle min.* (They keep on putting me in a class with a lot of repeaters. Then we are 60 learners in a class. I've asked Mr. X to take me out of that class, but he did not want to do it. So I decided to leave school. How is it possible, 60 learners in a class group? These learners never listen to the teacher. They make a noise and they do not pay attention).

Smaller class sizes, more personalised settings and individualised learning plans are identified as characteristics for lowered dropout rates (DOE,

2007:102). Smaller class groups can ensure that learners who need support can be identified easily. The purpose of education support is no longer simply to respond to the learning difficulties of individuals, but whenever possible to prevent problems and actively work towards enhancing the wellbeing and academic success of all learners (Jonson and Green, 2007).

#### **4.3.2.5 Communication and conflict**

One of the ways to enhance the wellbeing and academic success of learners is through positive communication. Communication is one of the most important aspects that need to be nurtured from an early stage. The way teachers engage and communicate with learners have a direct impact on how they accept authority figures and how they behave towards teachers. Feeling connected to others is a basic human need. This human need develops relationships, a sense of belonging and motivation of learners. These aspects are essential for learners' success and engagement in school.

**Learner 4:** *Mnr. X het my uit die klas gesit, ek moet op die stoep buite wag, hy het gesê hy sal nou by my wees. Hy het my uitgesit, omdat ek nie my huiswerk gedoen het nie. Ma hoe kan ek my huiswerk doen as ek geskors was. Ek het da byte gewag, toe kom mnr. Y verby en sien my op die stoep en toe kry ek weer 'n brief dat my ma moet kom. Ek het vi mnr. Y gesê hy kan vir mnr. X vra. Hy het my uitgesit. Ma hy het nie na my geluister. Dit was my ma se, ek wietie seke 11 de of 12 de kee wat sy skool toe gekom het. Ek het toe besluit om ma die skool te los, want my ma kannie aanmekaar uit die werk bly om vir my skool toe te kom nie.* (Mr. X put me out of his class. He told me I must wait outside on the stoep. He put me outside, because I did not do his homework. But how could I have done his homework if I was suspended? I waited outside and Mr. Y came along. He immediately gave me a letter. I must bring my mom to school. I told him Mr. X put me out of his class but he did not listen to me. My mother was at school eleven or twelve times. I decided to leave school, because my mom cannot stay out of her work every time to come to school).



To improve the relationship between educators and learners, especially those who are most at risk, should be an essential component of any school's improvement plan. Educators must be reminded that how they treat the learners is just as important as the curriculum that they teach. No programme or strategy for dropout reduction is powerful enough to overcome poor relationships. If educators can create a positive environment for every potential dropout, school will become something learners look forward to, rather than a place that they want to avoid (South et al., 2003).

#### **4.3.2.6 Reasons for dropping out of school**

The creation of a positive environment may have an influence on decisions that learners make to stay in school. There were several reasons why learners in this study dropped out of school. These reasons include: the lack of motivation, financial problems, drug abuse, repeating of grades and no suspension. Five learners view their reasons as follows:

**Learner 1: 'n Gebrek aan motivering (Lack of Motivation)** - *Niemand het in my belang gestel nie. My ma het nie eens met my geworry nie.* (Nobody cared about me. Not even my mother worried about me).

**Learner 3: Finansiële Probleme (Financial Problems)** - *My klasonderwyser het vir my gesê die hoof het aan hulle genoem hulle kannie ons raporte gee as ons skoolfooie nog nie betaal is nie. Ons ouers moet skool toe kom. My ma was in 'n ongeluk en het haar werk verloor, ma sy moes nog altyd my skoolfooie betaal het. Toe besluit ek om skool te los en ma te gaan werk.* (My class teacher told us that the principal told them that they cannot give our reports if we did not pay our school fees. My mom was in an accident and she lost her job, but she was still liable to pay the school fees. Then I decided to leave school and get a job).

**Learner 5: Dwelmmisbruik (Drug abuse)** - *Ek het betrokke geraak by verkeerde dinge. Ma ek rook nie meer dagga nie, ek is kla met dai, ek werk*

*nou.* (I was involved in doing wrong things. I don't smoke dagga any more. I'm finished with that stuff I'm working now).

**Learner 2: Herhaling van graad (Repeating of grade)** - *Hulle willie na my en my ma geluister het om my in 'n ander klas te sit nie. Dit was my tweede jaar in dai klas* (They did not listen to my mom and my request to put me in another class. It was my second year in that class).

**Learner 4: Suspensie (Suspension)** - *Ek was te veel geskors en my ma het gesê ek moet ma die skool los want sy kan nie elke keer uit haar werk uit bly om skool toe te kom nie.* (I was suspended too many times. My mom told me that I must rather stay at home, because she cannot stay out of her work every time for the same things).

Educators need to acknowledge that all learners have different needs. They have different styles and methods of engaging with the teaching and learning process, they require different levels and forms of support at different times during their lives and are affected in different ways by a range of external factors which influence their participation in classroom (Howell, 2007) and school activities.

#### **4.3.2.7 Support of parents**

Parents are important partners to ensure that children are able to overcome barriers to learning. In some instances parents might be insensitive to the needs of children and some cases make decisions that are detrimental to the child's well being. One of the participant's situation at home, contributed directly to her becoming rebellious towards rules and school.

**Learner 6:** *My ma het dan weer ha boyfriend toegelaat, ma hy wil my verkrag het. Juffrou M het met haar gepraat, ma sy willie geluister het nie.* (My mother allowed her boyfriend back in the house after he wanted to rape me. Miss M talked to her, but she did not want to listen).

It is very important for children to know that their parents love, care for and understand them. They must give that assurance to their children that they are capable of keeping them safe and will protect them.

#### **4.3.2.8 The needs of learners who drop out of school**

The learners who dropped out of school have identified the following needs as important to stay in school. People who understand, listen and respect them, creating challenges and engagement, positive role models, parents and teachers who trust and believe in their ability to achieve, people who make time for them and parents who are committed to their children.

**Learner 5:** *Ek het net iemand nodig gehad wat my verstaan. Ouers en onderwysers wat in my vermoëns glo om uit te styg. Goeie positiewe rolmodelle na wie ek kan opgekyk het. Ouers en onderwysers wat in my vermoëns glo om uit te styg. Positiewe uitdagings, waarin ek my kon uitgeleef het.* (I just needed somebody who understands me. Parents and educators who believed in my ability to achieve. Good, positive role models that I could have looked up to. Positive challenges that I can engage in).

**Learner 2:** *Onderwysers wat na my luister en my behoeftes respekteer.* (Educators who listen to me and respect my needs).

**Learner 6:** *Mense wat daar is vir my, nie die heel tyd besig is met hul eie dinge nie.* (People who are there for me, not busy with their own interests the whole time).

**Learner 3:** *Iemand wat my skoolfooie en boeke kon betaal het.* (Somebody who could pay my schoolfees and books).

**Learner 6:** *'n Ma wat haar kind eerste stel en nie haar boyfriend.* (A mother who puts a child first and not her boyfriend).

**Learner 1:** *Liefde en aanvaarding vir wie ek is.* (Love and acceptance for who I am).

The above reasons can be addressed by the school through the adoption of a health promoting school ethos. The health-promoting school aims at achieving healthy lifestyles for the total school population by developing supportive environments conducive to the promotion of personal health. It offers opportunities for and requires commitment to the provision of a safe and health-enhancing social and physical environment (Donald, 2002).

#### **4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The researcher came to the conclusion that although the school has a TST it is not functioning effectively to render support to the learners. The TST needs structure to make the support more effective and to make sure that the learners' needs are addressed according and to the best ability of the team. With a proper structure in place more learners can be identified and get support where and when needed.

As the researcher previously mentioned, the recommendations were done in the form of a TST manual (**Addendum I**). This manual gives guidelines to the TST on the proper functioning and structuring of the team. The manual focuses on:

- The aims of the TST,
- Different role players in the TST,
- Guidelines of TST meetings,
- The roles and responsibilities of role players in the support team,
- The functioning and structure of the grade model in schools,
- Protocol for referring learners,
- Duties and responsibilities of grade teams,
- The different barriers to learning and
- Referral forms.

#### **4.4.1 Conclusion**

This section summarises the discussion and recommendations of this research study, as it relates to strengthening the support structure of the school. This includes the need for policy formulation, curriculum and resources combined with ongoing training and support to enable educators to engage with the work of learner support.

Issues that affected the functioning of the TST include a responsive (or lack thereof) School Management Team, an effective and functional sub – group that meets regularly, the misconception of educators how to support learners and the involvement (or lack thereof) of community expertise and district based support teams.

The lack of collaboration between the school and community based resources and expertise; the establishment of a functional referral system as well as the monitoring and evaluation of interventions, have all been identified as important components in the support process. Further study should be done on these aspects.

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## ADDENDUM A

### PERSONAL

- ❖ Negative self-concept and low self-esteem.
- ❖ Involvement in criminal activities and clashes with the law.
- ❖ Negative attitude towards school.
- ❖ Rejection of authority and authority figures.
- ❖ Conflict with educator(s) and/or school management.
- ❖ Continually seeking attention and frequently argumentative.
- ❖ Little experience of success.

### MEDICAL

- ❖ Serious health and disability medical.
- ❖ Serious mental health conditions.
- ❖ Pregnancy.
- ❖ HIV/AIDS infection.
- ❖ Substance abuse (involvement with alcohol and drugs).
- ❖ Psycho-somatic complications and stress-related complications.

### EDUCATIONAL

- ❖ Barriers to learning (physical, mental, sensory, neurological and development impairments, psycho-social disturbances, differences in intellectual ability, life experiences and socio-economic deprivation).
- ❖ Discrepancy between ability and achievement.
- ❖ Poor scholastic progress in at least two learning areas.
- ❖ Significant literacy and/or numeric difficulties.
- ❖ Poor time management.
- ❖ Lack of interest in the curriculum / failure to see relevance in schoolwork.
- ❖ Grade retention and separation of peer group.
- ❖ "Enforced" transfer, suspension and expulsion.

### FAMILY

- ❖ Dysfunctional and unstable family.
- ❖ Disturbed relationship with parent(s) / lack of parental support.
- ❖ Single-parent home / foster parents / living alone.
- ❖ Parental divorce and / or separation.

### SOCIAL

- ❖ Poor social relationship and social isolation (often older than class group).
- ❖ Chronic truancy and / or frequent absenteeism.
- ❖ Peer-group violence and going membership.

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC

- ❖ Chronic poverty and a desire to earn money.
- ❖ Need to supplement family income.
- ❖ Care for siblings or own child.

### ADDITIONAL

- ❖ Lack of adequate after-care facilities.
- ❖ Lack of effective parental and educator role-models.
- ❖ Lack of multi-cultural tolerance
- ❖ Feeling unsafe at school.

**Table 1:** The warnings signs of at-risk learners (Source: Phillips 2005)

## **ADDENDUM B**

### **Vrae aan koördineerders van verskillende groepe in TST**

1. Hoe gereeld het die groep vergader om die verwysing van die leerder te doen?
2. Het enige een van u in die groep opleiding ontvang in die area waarin u tans ondersteuning aanbied?
3. Wie was almal betrokke in die identifisering van die leerder se behoeftes?
4. Wat was die prosedure wat gevolg was toe die leerder na u groep verwys was?
5. Wat het die ondersteuningsplan behels wat u vir die leeder beplan het?
6. Was die leeder gedurende die verwysing-en – ondersteuningsproses gemonitor?
7. Was die leerder se ondersteuningsplan geëvalueer?
8. Wat het vir die groep en vir die leerder gewerk?
9. Wat het nie gewerk vir die groep of vir die leerder gewerk nie?
10. Wat dink u het u nodig gehad om die leerder op skool te hou?

#### **Questions for Educators in the different groups of the TST**

1. How often did the group meet to do the referral of the learner?
2. Did anyone in your groups receive training in how to support a learner in the area where you are?
3. Who was involved in the identification of the learners' need?
4. What was the procedure when the learner was referred to your group?
5. What was the support plan that was put in place for the learner?
6. Was the learner monitored during the referral and support process?
7. Was the learners' support plan evaluated?
8. What worked for the group and the learner?
9. What did not work for the group and for the learner?
10. What do you think was needed to have to keep the learner on school?

## **ADDENDUM C**

### **Vraelys van Leerders**

1. Hoe oud is jy nou?
2. Hoe oud was jy toe jy die skool verlaat het en in watter graad was dit?
3. Was daar enige rede/s hoekom jy die skool so vroeg verlaat het en wat was die redes?
4. Het jy die onderwyser(s) ingelig van jou probleem of redes?
5. Hoe en wat het hulle gedoen om jou te ondersteun?
6. Hoe voel jy oor die ondersteuning wat hulle vir jou om aangebied het, het dit gehelp?
7. Wat het jy nodig gehad om in die skool sisteem te gebly het?

### **Questions for Learners**

1. How old are you now?
2. How old were you when you have left the school and in which grade was it?
3. Were there any reasons why you left school and what was it?
4. Did you inform the teacher(s) about your problem?
5. How and what did they do to support you?
6. How did you feel about the support that you have received?
7. What did you need to stay in the school system?

**ADDENDUM D**

**N: Hoe is jy nou?**

L: Ek is 17 jaar oud

**N: Hoe oud was jy toe jy die skool verlaat het?**

L: Ek was 16 jaar oud en ek was in gr.9.

**N: Was daar enige redes hoekom jy die skool vroeg verlaat het en wat was dit?**

L: Hulle bly my saam met 'n klomp druipelinge sit. (Leerder bly rukkie stil) Dan is ons 60 in 'n klas. Ek en my ma het vir mnr.X gevra om my uit dai klas te haal ma hulle willie dit gedoen het nie (leerder sak kop en praat). Toe besluit ek ma ek los die skool. (leerder lig kop weer op) Wa kan jy 60 in 'n klas. Dai kinnners lyster nooit vi die onderwyser. Hulle raas en gaan te kere. Hulle steer hulle min.

**N: Het jy die onderwyser(s) ingelig van jou probleem of redes?**

L: Hulle willie na my en my ma geluister het om my in 'n ander klas te sit nie. Dit was my tweede jaar in dai klas..

**N: Hoe en wat het hulle gedoen om jou te ondersteun?**

L: Hulle het my nie geondersteun. Hulle het dan nooit no my gelyster as ek hulle vra om my na 'n ander klas te skyf.

**N: Hoe voel jy oor die ondersteuning wat hulle vir jou om aangebied het, het dit gehelp?**

L: Hulle het dan niks vir my gedoen nie. Elke keer wanneer ek na Mnr.Y toe gegaan het dan sê hy vir my more. Ma hy het my nooit kom iut haal en in 'n ander klas gesit nie.

**N: Wat het jy nodig gehad om in die skool sisteem te gebly het?**

L: Onderwysers wat na my luister en my behoeftes respekteer. Mense wat daar is vir my, nie die heel tyd besig is met hul eie dinge nie.

## ADDENDUM E

### **Etiese Riglyne en Toestemmingsvorm vir Opvoeders**

Die onderstaande word aanbeveel as 'n maatstaaf om privaatheid en konfidensialiteit te eerbiedig van opvoeders, die skool en die navorser.

1. Konfidensialiteit sal behoue bly in enige geskrewe verslag. Geen name van personeellede, opvoeders, leerders of die skool sal geopenbaar word nie.
2. Transkripsie notas sal beskikbaar wees vir opvoeders indien hulle dit verlang, of om die geldigheid daarvan te verklaar.
3. Geen persoonlike of private inligting sal by die opvoeder versoek word. Alle inligting sal op 'n respektvolle en private hoedanigheid gehandhaaf word.
4. Alle besprekings word privaat gehandteer sonder eksterne besoekers of waarnemers.
5. Geen inligting mag aan ander personeellede of bestuurslede verskaf word na besprekings. (Dit wat in die groep bespreek word, moet by die groep bly).

### **Toestemming**

Ek \_\_\_\_\_ verklaar dat ek my volle ondersteuning en samewerking vir die duur van die navorsing wat poog om vas te stel of die ondersteuning wat die Onderwys Ondersteunings Span gee, 'n invloed het op die leeder se keuse om opskool te bly. Ek verstaan dat dit my reg is om enige tyd van die navorsingsproses te onttrek indien ek ongemaklik voel met die proses.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Handtekening

\_\_\_\_\_  
Datum

## ADDENDUM F

Brief aan ouers van leerders wat deelgeneem het aan die navorsing

Geagte Ouers/Voog

U seun/dogter het aan my die toestemming gegee om 'n onderhoud met hom/haar te voer. Hierdie onderhoud is slegs vir navorsingsdoeleindes en ek verseker u dat alle informasie konfidensiëel gehanteer sal word.

Die onderstaande vrae sal aan u kind gevra word.

### Vraelys van Leerders

8. Hoe oud is jy no?
9. Hoe oud was jy toe jy die skool verlaat het en in watter graad was dit?
10. Was daar enige rede/s hoekom jy die skool so vroeg verlaat het en wat was die redes?
11. Het jy die onderwyser(s) ingelig van jou probleem of redes?
12. Hoe en wat het hulle gedoen om jou te ondersteun?
13. Hoe voel jy oor die ondersteuning wat hulle vir jou om aangebied het, het dit gehelp?
14. Wat het jy nodig gehad om in die skool sisteem te gebly het?

U is welkom om in te sit by die onderhoud. Die onderhoud sal by u huis plaas vind.

Kan u asseblief die onderstaande toestemmingsbrief onderteken. Ek sal dit kry wanneer die onderhoud plaasvind.

Hiermee verleen ek \_\_\_\_\_ toestemming  
aan \_\_\_\_\_ om 'n onderhoud met my kind te voer.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Handtekening

\_\_\_\_\_  
Datum

## **ADDENDUM G**

A Manual  
For a  
Teacher Support Team (TST)  
Of a  
High School

**Compiled by**

**Liezl Terhoeven**

**Med. Support Education**

**2008**



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## Introduction

Teacher Support Teams (TST) are collaborative, problem solving teams which have been organized to assist in the determination of learner-centred problems. The main aim of teacher support teams is to implement, monitor and evaluate individual empowering plans (IEP) for learners who are facing problems in barriers to learning. These teams will analyze learners' problems, develop and implement appropriate interventions and strategies to provide desired change. The TST primary focus is to address academic, medical, behavioural and/or other barriers which may interfere with a learners' ability to obtain a "normal" education or to progress.

Students who are at-risk need to be assist and support by the TST as well. Although the resolution of student problems is the primary focus of TST, the TST chairperson must organise school-wide training sessions to provide information regarding the development and implementation of intervention strategies needed to assist learners.

The role of the TST must not be underestimated in building resilience in learners and preventing them from dropping out of school. They are building on the foundation to identified, support and to maximise the services that is offered and to decrease the barriers that learners' are facing (Engelbrecht, 2002).

This manual is compiled to give guidance and more structure to a high school TST. It is imperative that the every role player in the TST must know their responsibility is in the support structure.

## 2. WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF THE TST?

The Department of Education in South Africa (2001) sees the core function and aim of the TST as:

- ❖ Co-ordinating all learner, educator, curriculum and institution development support in the institution.

- ❖ Collectively identifying institutional needs and, in particular, barriers to learning at learner, educator, curriculum and institutional-level.
- ❖ Collectively developing strategies to address these needs and barriers to learning.
- ❖ Drawing in the resources needed, from within and outside of the institution, to address these challenges.
- ❖ Monitoring and evaluating the work of the team within an “action-reflection” framework.

The primary focus of the TST is to address academic, medical, behavioural and/or other problems which may interfere with a learners’ ability to attain an appropriate education (barriers to learning).

### **3. WHO ARE THE ROLE PLAYERS IN THE TST?**

SMT, TST co-ordinator, class teachers, grade head, parents, peers, class monitors, RCL members, classmates SBST, non-teaching staff, other experts in the community, and anyone who can make a positive contribution to change in the learner.

### **4. WHEN DOES THE TST/SUB-GROUP MEET?**

The grade level TST coordinator (grade head) and the TST chairperson (principal) can meet when they have SMT meetings. It is recommended that the grade heads’ and their TST team must meet every second week (Manual of procedures and guidelines for the TST team 2005:9).

### **5. WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES FOR TST MEETING?**

- 5.1. Prior to the initial meeting, the referring teacher discuss the case with the TST grade head and completes a TST Referral Form attaching documentations of strategies tried and their outcomes (Addendum A and Addendum B).
- 5.2. The TST grade head review the TST Referral form. If the form is complete and in order, the grade head establishes a TST file on the learner. If not in order, the referral form is returned to the teacher for completion and/or correction.

- 5.3. The grade head notify the team of a meeting including the referring teacher/s.
- 5.4. The notification of the meeting include:
  - The date, time and venue
  - The purpose of the meeting
  - A scribe must be elected or pointed before the meeting. The grade head cannot serve as a scribe.
- 5.5. The referring teacher present the case, sharing with the team strategies already tried and their outcome. The team members discuss the case and clarify the problem(s).
- 5.6. The team determines if additional information and/ or if a specialist (e.g. psychologist, nurse, social worker or speech therapist) should be consulted. If additional information or input from a specialist/ consultant is needed and is not easily available, the scribe must reflect it in the minutes. The grade head is given the responsibility for making contact with the TST coordinator. The coordinator must make contact with the specialist and/or collecting additional information. This meeting is adjourned and the second meeting is scheduled.
- 5.7. If additional information is not required, proceed to the next step.
- 5.8. The team may modify strategies already tried by the teacher and/or generate new strategies. It is critical to make sure that the strategies match the presenting problems. Strategies should be different from those being implemented with the balance of the class.
- 5.9. Problems are seldom singular; the team should prioritize problems if possible. When academic, behavioural, and physical problems are manifested simultaneously, the team may want to address all three. Though each case is unique, attention initially is given to physical symptoms, then to academic problems, and finally to behavioural symptoms if they are still present. As a rule, no more than three instructional or two behavioural strategies should be implemented at a time.

5.10. If no specialists are needed, the team develops the Individual Empowerment Plan (IEP). The team assigns responsibilities for implementation, teacher support, monitoring, follow-up, etc.

5.11. Evaluation techniques and review date(s) are indicated in the plan

## **6. SHOULD THE TST BE AFRAID TO CHANGE?**

When planning for the success of learners, there are no guarantees that the initial plan is the most appropriate or effective. Therefore, the team should not be afraid to evaluate what has been implemented and determine the appropriateness of the strategy and/or modification. If strategies, modifications and/or resources are not accomplishing the stated goal(s) and objective(s), don't be afraid to make changes. You may not have to discard the entire plan, but you may need to make some adjustments. This is a golden rule.

## **7. HOW LONG MUST A TEACHER SERVE IN A GROUP/TEAM?**

It is recommended that the grade head and teachers must progress to the next grade as the learners' is progressing. New groups can be formed every 3-5 years. This will ensure that learners' progress can be monitored and evaluated as the group is supporting them. A relationship of trust is build between group members, other experts involved, parents, and learners. The training that was invested in teachers can be utilized for a number of years. Educators can become experts in the field of supporting in that specific area. Teachers need to be in a group where they can make a contribution and where they feel at ease to work with other colleagues.

## **8. WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION AND TEAMWORK?**

Teacher Support Teams should be exactly what the name states, a Team. The expectation, when a teacher requests support for the learner, is that attempts have been made to modify the learners program and desired results have not been obtained. Therefore, assistance from other experts is required. Collectively, the TST:

- Discusses the problem(s) the learner is experiencing.

- Brainstorms possible strategies and modifications to assist in alleviating the problem(s) and allowing the learner to experience success.
- Develops the strategies and/or modifications, as well as determines who will implement them.
- Establishes the evaluation techniques to be utilized to determine whether the strategies and/or modifications have been effective.
- Develops the expected outcomes for the student as a result of the TST experience.
- Determines whether the experience has or has not been effective and the possible follow up activities. The TST should never be thought of or treated as a committee of one person. It is a Team of professionals, who have expertise in the areas in which the student is experiencing difficulty, who come together to discuss the problems and plan for the student's success.

## **9. WHO SHOULD CO-ORDINATE THE TST?**

Preferably the principal of the high school, because of his/her availability, they can build networks with other organisations, working closely with other role players such as SBST, and parents. If the principal lack the skills and the ability to lead the group only then, must one of the other SMT members step into this great responsibility of taking ownership and accountability for capacity building of learners as well as educators.

## **10. WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TST CO-ORDINATOR?**

- Make sure that referrals is done accordingly
- Make sure TST groups meet on a regular basis
- Make sure that reports from other experts in the community, SBST, NGO's and sub-groups are in and on time and the grade heads receives the necessary information.
- Make sure that the support that learners received is monitored and evaluated.
- Fostering new meanings of diversity
- Promoting inclusive practices within the school

- Building connections between the school and the community
  - Increased likelihood of learners completing high school
  - Create a better understanding of learners needs by both parents and teachers
  - Improved learners attitudes, conduct and attendance
  - Improve teacher morale
  - Create and organise training for teachers (especially in the field of inclusive school education)
  - Make sure that all teachers are trained in the National Policies of HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, abuse no more, act.
  - Do staff development exercises based on case studies that happened in the school.
  - Is an agent of change by changing the curriculum to address barriers to learning.
  - Make sure that all role players in the school are participating actively in process of restructuring and reculturing.
  - Make sure that the learner's needs and goals become the focus of collaborative decision making.
  - Making sure there is creative problem solving, shared responsibility and accountability amongst role players
  - Resources and equipment are available to address barriers effectively.
  - Make sure that the classes in to overcrowded
- (Rielh 2000, Oswald 2007, McKenzie and Loebenstein 2007).

#### **11. WHAT ARE THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SMT MEMBERS?**

- The role of the SMT members is to support the principal in the above responsibilities to enhance and ensure capacity building.
- To be effective and productive professionally and personally.
- To maintain their own dignity, safety, and security.
- Be proactive and visionary



- To participate in a school community that fosters professional growth and development, tolerates their differences, limitations, capacities, and needs.
- To initiate and sustain relationships with other professionals.
- To engage in life-long learning
- Make sure that all teachers are trained in the National and School Policy.
- Make sure that all teachers are trained in the Abuse no More Policy
- They need to be responsible
- To share knowledge with others and offer support.
- To teach their students make choices and allow real choice making among limited options.
- To teach children how to exert control over their environment in socially acceptable ways.
- To teach workplace skills (cooperative work, conflict management, communication).
- To teach skills for establishing and maintaining relationships.
- To provide normal environments and access to people with different capacities and limitations.
- To continually enhance their understanding of themselves as learners, to self-assess strengths and weaknesses, to engage in change, and to gain new information  
(Sands, Kozleski and French, 2000).

## **12. WHAT ARE THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS?**

- To improve their quality of life.
- To maintain family life.
- To make choices for themselves and their children.
- To control their environment.
- To provide security and safety for their children.
- To maintain productivity.
- To promote community participation and support for themselves and their children.

- To provide their children's needs and interests that allow for their own quality of life and the quality of life of their children.
- To interact with school professionals and to advocate for the needs and interests of their own children, as well as all children.
- To support the efforts of school professionals when those efforts have the intention of increasing their children's quality of life or that of other children.
- To support school personnel in providing a secure, safe environment for their own children, as well as all children.
- To support their own children to becoming caring individuals who can interact with and support the learning and social needs of their schoolmates.
- To continue to grow and learn and engage in change (Sands, Kozleski and French, 2000).

### **13. WHAT ARE THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LEARNERS'?**

- Take responsibility of the decisions made.
- Is on time for meetings or group discussions.
- Do what is expected of him/her
- Take responsibility for personal growth and development in the process of support
- Ask when assistance and support is needed
- Make use of the opportunities that are given to them
- Set goals for themselves
- Is actively involved in the support process
- Make time for reflection
- Make changes when is expected of him/her
- Take ownership of life and school career path

### **14. WHAT ARE THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT BASED SUPPORT TEAM?**

The core focus of the DBST is to build capacity and to support educational institutions in recognising and addressing learning difficulties (Jonson and

Green 2007). Their key responsibility is to provide curriculum, assessment and instructional support (Department of Education 2001). The district support team needs to be able to develop a strong, integrated approach to education support that involves both education structures and resources in the community (Jonson and Green 2007).

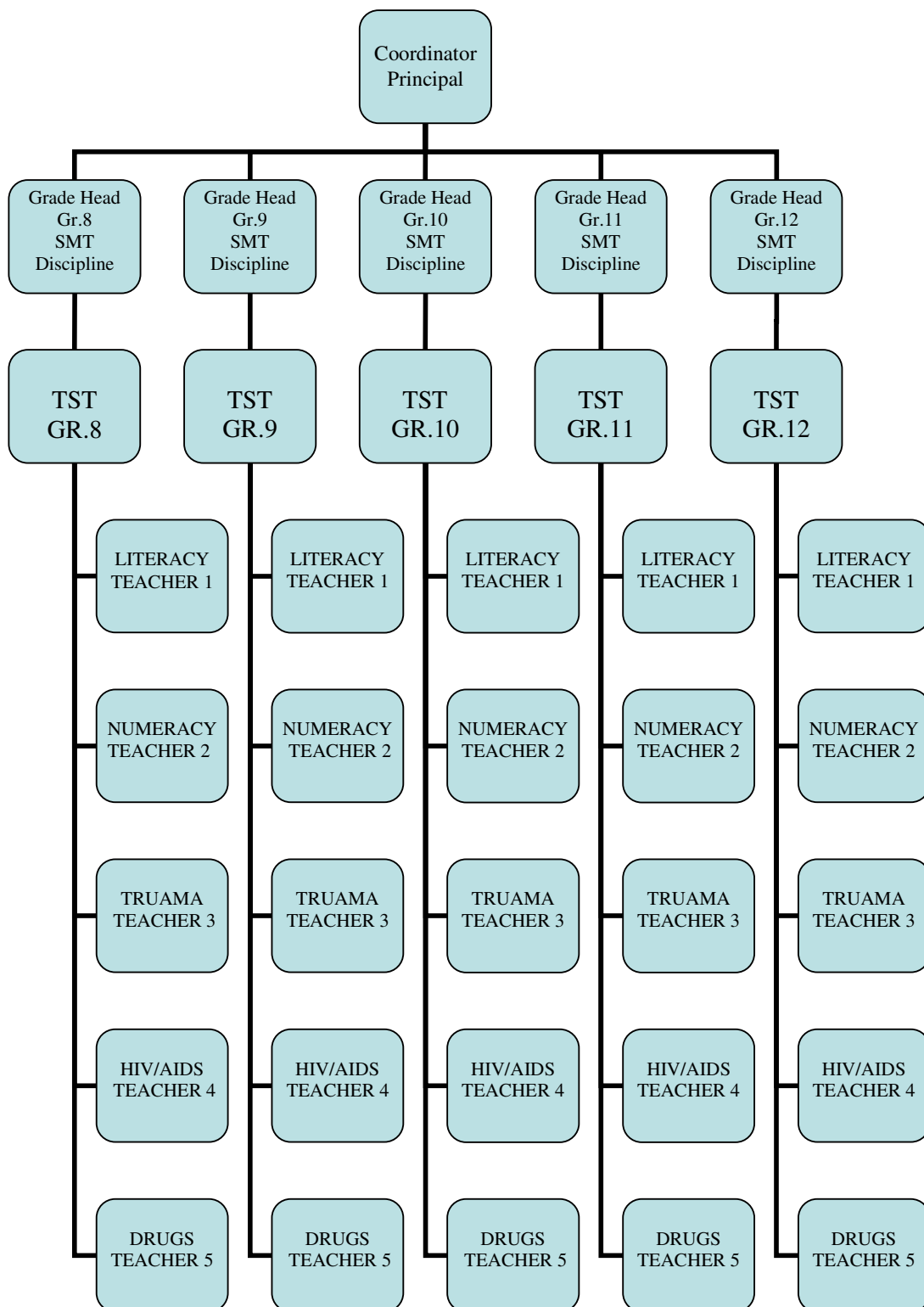
A. Provide training            B. Capacity building            C. Support where needed  
D. Do assessments and referrals    E. Is actively involved in the support process

### **15. THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF THE TST**

The school can use a grade level model for the functioning of the TST. The grade level model is model where the grade heads of the school is the sub-coordinator of the specific grade that they are responsible for. Each grade has a TST team. This grade team is responsible for learners in that specific grade. This implies that all the SMT members will be the coordinators of one of the grade TST, except the one SMT member who is responsible in coordinating the TST.

The coordinating of SMT members will enhance the line of communication. This communication can be part of the report back to the principal in the SMT meetings as well as staff meetings. These reports will enable the SMT about problems that might occur in their departments or in the classrooms. It will inform the SMT to make informed decisions about training that the staff needs and how to address certain problems in the curriculum especially in the area of numeracy and literacy. The involvement of the SMT members will enhance effective functioning of the teams, and the staff will realise the importance of their role as educators in the supporting of learners. The SMT has the extra time (additional admin periods) to work through referrals quickly and to do follow up where needed.

## 15.1. THE GRADE MODEL



## **15.2. THE FUNCTIONING OF THE GRADE MODEL IN THE SCHOOL**

The TST must be divided into different grades according to the needs of the school and the grade. These needs must be determined by the educators, parents and learners.

As indicated above each grade has a TST group. The grade head of the specific grade will act as a TST grade co-ordinator. The principal or one of the deputy principals can be the TST chairperson.

The TST grade head co-ordinator is responsible to make sure that the grade team meets on a regular basis, that referrals are taken care of and that the needs of the learners in that specific grade are addressed. The teachers are divided into the team according to their class teacher status (gr.8, 9 or 10). This implies that the gr.8 grade head will have five gr.8 class teachers who will form part of the gr.8 TST. All the teachers in the group will be responsible for coordinating one of the following needs for that specific grade. The needs are: HIV/AIDS, trauma, learning support and substance abuse (There can be more or less needs depending on the needs analyses done by educators, learners and parents of that specific grade).

The TST grade head is responsible to send a monthly report to the TST co-ordinator (principal). The TST co-ordinator is responsible to make sure that referrals have been done. He/She is the contact person with the District Support Team.

## **16. HOW DO THE GRADE GROUPS FUNCTION?**

Though some flexibility is necessary, the following guidelines are recommended.

- A.** Each TST is composed of five or more identified committee membership in the grade (class teachers of the specific grade).
- B.** Identified TST procedures must be written and can include the following steps:

- Parental notification of all TST meetings. Parents should be informed of problems prior to the initial TST meeting.
- Identification of student's needs.
- Class- and subject teachers may conduct academic and behavioural progress report and keep notes without parental permission.
- Parental permission is needed in the case of psychological assessments and evaluation.
- Development of an Individual Empowerment Plan (IEP) which addresses student's needs as identified above.
- **Best practice requires that parents always be kept informed; this practice should be routine for all students.**

**C.** Follow-up and provision of the support of the teacher.

Follow-up support for the teacher is elected in the TST meeting (for example, the grade co-ordinator and/or principal may be elected to support and follow up).

**D.** Evaluation and observation of the student's progress (IEP review, must be with recommendations. It is important to follow through on recommendations made by the team. Evaluation of techniques may include classroom assignments, informal or formal assessments. The observation is completed on the TST observation form. As decisions/plans for the next school year are being made, the IEP, learners in the TST process, must be reviewed.

## **17. THE PROTOCOL THAT NEEDS TO BE FOLLOWED AT THE REFFERAL OF LEARNERS'**

17.1. Identify learners and categorise in which sub-group they must be referred to.

17.2. Class teacher or subject teacher refers the incident on a referral forms (Addendum A and Addendum B) to the grade head.

17.3. The grade head notify the parents/guardians of the referral and invite the parents/guardians to the TST meeting.

The notification of the meeting includes:

- The date, time and venue

- The purpose of the meeting
- 17.4. All the referral teachers and team members as well as parent(s) must be part of this meeting.
  - 17.5. Parent and learner responsibilities (no.12 and 13 in manual), are given to the parent during this meeting (parent must communicate with learner regarding their responsibility in the process of support).
  - 17.6. It is important that minutes must be taken during this meeting. The following aspects must be reflected in the meeting.
  - 17.7. The team discuss matters with parents eg. Primary school history (repeating of grades, banking, problem to do homework) this information is important in gr.8. and gr.9. The transition stage. Friends and communicating with peer group. Change in family structure (stephmon/dad, new born, death). Taking part in any school or community activity. Church or religious involvement.
  - 17.8. The team with parent(s) complete addendum C.
  - 17.9. The level of support must be determined in this meeting (use addendum E to determine level of support).The indication of support will determine in which category the learner will fall.
  - 17.10. If the learner needs support in level 4 and 5, where the SBST is involved the referral forms (available at TST coordinator) can be completed and sign by the parent at this meeting.
  - 17.11. If the learner needs support in level 1-3 then the meeting continues and the group complete addendum C. The following aspects must be reflected in the minutes:
    - the academic progress
    - the ability to complete tasks/homework
    - banking and truancy
  - 17.12. The group worked out an individual empowerment plan (IEP) (using learning to barriers guide) for the learner. The group must indicate who will be responsible for the monitoring of the learner.
  - 17.13. After a period of two weeks of supporting and monitoring the group meets again to evaluate/review (complete addendum D) the support that was given. If there is no improvement the SBST must be notified.

- 17.14. School psychologist visits the school - Referral forms, minutes and IEP must be produced.
- 17.15. School psychologist handles case further. Doing referrals, working with the group to improve the improvement plan, give guidance, and give training when needed. Get other experts involve.
- 17.16. Support is monitored and reported.
- 17.17. Evaluation of support must be reported.

## **18. DIRECTIONS FOR THE GRADE HEADS AND CLASS TEACHERS INVOLVE IN A SPECIFIC AREA OF CONCERN IN THE GRADE**

- 18.1. Trauma** - The teacher involve with **trauma** must deal with: death, rape, molestation, pregnancy, blackmail, and feeding (malnutrition).
- 18.2. Learning support** must be divided into two areas of concern, namely literacy and numeracy.
- Teachers involved with **literacy** must be the language teachers in that specific grade. They are responsible for reading, writing and concentration.
  - Teachers involved with **numeracy** must be the mathematics teachers. They are responsible for mathematics and concentration.
- 18.3. Discipline problems** The grade head, discipline officer, principal and staff members are responsible for discipline over all, but the discipline on grade level is the responsibility of the grade head. The grade head are responsible for the **discipline problems**: discipline, attitudes, fighting, assault, banking and truancy.
- 18.4. HIV/Aids** - The teachers responsible for the teaching of Life Orientation in that specific grade can take the responsibility of coordinating the HIV/AIDS.
- 18.5. Drugs** - Teachers with a passion that know how to communicate with learners and who have a willingness to walk a path with learners must be elected. They are responsible for all the learners who are referred to them in a specific grade. Drugs includes: alcohol, dagga, methamphetamine (Tik), LSD, any form of drugs.



## **19. GENERAL GUIDELINES AND FUNCTIONING OF GRADE GROUPS**

### **19.1. ADMINISTRATION OF GRADE GROUP**

- The grade head is responsible for the administration of documents.
- Every grade coordinator must have two files. All the relevant policies must be in one file and all the referrals and minutes must be in the other file.

#### **19.1.1. The policies that should be in the file are:**

- WCED's discipline's policy
- The school's code of conduct.
- National HIV/Aids policy for schools
- The school's own HIV/Aids policy
- The Abuse No More protocol
- National Policy for drugs in schools
- The school's own policy about the handling of drugs in schools
- Assessment policies must be in file.
- Pass qualifications as requested by the National Department of Education

#### **19.1.2. What is the information that must be in the referral file?**

- Thorough minutes of meetings.
- Records of interventions with learners need to be in the file.
- A list of organisations and people who can assist the group needs to be in the file.

## **20. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEACHERS IN GRADE TEAMS**

### **20.1. DUTIES FOR TEACHER RESPONSIBLE FOR DISCIPLINE IN GRADE**

The coordinator is responsible for the learners' behaviour in a specific grade. He/She is responsible to establish positive behaviour and to address negative behaviour. The grade heads are recommended to act as coordinator for specific grades.

The following is important:

- They must know discipline's policy of WCED.
- They must know the code of conduct the school.
- The policy must address the spirit of restorative justice.
- If the policy addresses restorative justice it will help to compile a diversion programme for the school.
- There must be clear guidelines in the handling of negative behaviour on different levels of account.
- There must be a whole school approach towards the progress of good, positive behaviour.
- There needs to be a support programme for individual learners with behaviour problems.
- Network list of NGO's and other organisations who can offer help.
- They must ensure that the Boys Town Model is implemented in grades.
- Clear monitoring and implementation of the intervention programmes.

## **20.2. DUTIES FOR TEACHER RESPONSIBLE HIV/AIDS IN GRADE:**

- Teachers must know the National HIV/Aids policy for schools.
- Is responsible for programmes in grade.
- Referral of learners' (in grade) to relevant NGO's in community.
- Organising first aid kits for classrooms (in grade).
- Is responsible that universal guidelines at school and sport are followed.
- Make sure that all the gr. 8 and gr. 9 learners have their HIV/Aids life skills books and that they work out of it (teacher responsible for grade).
- Make sure that all the gr. 10 and gr. 11 learners follow the Personal Well-Being programme (teacher responsible for grade).
- Must be aware of the procedures that need to be followed when a child makes a claim of child molestation, rape or abuse.
- Steps that will be followed to ensure that all the learners and educators know the procedure in the above cases like child molestation, rape and abuse.
- Steps that will be followed to ensure that all the learners and educators will know where to get access to grants (HIV/Aids) and where to get support.
  - Learners must know where they can go test themselves.
  - Records must be kept with all the intervention with learners.

- This teacher can take the responsibility for teenage pregnancy in grade.

### **20.3. DUTIES FOR PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR TRAUMA IN GRADE**

- They must know the Abuse No More protocol of WCED.
- Builds network of support.
- Gives guidelines on what the grade will do to make learners aware of trauma and how they must behave.
- Be informed about the criteria for trauma.
- Contact PATCH immediately in case of any abuse or rape cases have been reported (021-852 6110). Where a learner is older than 18 Rape Crisis can be contacted.
- Contact school psychologist in case of any trauma.
- Keep record of learners that was referred for intervention.
- Work out strategies to support learner after professional support was given.

### **20.4. DUTIES FOR PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR DRUG ABUSE IN GRADE**

- They must know the National Policy for drugs in schools.
- They must know the school's own policy on the handling of drugs.
- Organise activities (for grade) to enhance the prevention of drugs - these activities must be planned and implemented carefully.
- Work out strategies to handle referrals of drug abuse.
- Create an awareness of the danger of drug abuse.
- Support to learners after they have been through a programme.
- Come up with alternative/creative ways in handling of drug abuse.
- Make sure that all teachers are trained in the National and School Policy.

### **20.5. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBLE FOR LEARNING SUPPORT IN GRADE**

- Must know the pass qualifications as requested by the National Department of Education.

- Clear understanding of the referral process to TST and to other support services, e.g. EMDC.
- Compile the steps that will be followed to support learners with special needs in the mainstream.
- Knowledge about options except mainstream, e.g. FET Colleges, ABET.
- Compilation of different programmes for learners with special educational needs, e.g. Alternative teaching methods/strategies.
- Clear understanding of alternative assessment and combination of strategies for alternative assessment.
- Intervention with learners – must be kept on record.

### **Very important: -**

- All emergency cases such as rape and suicide, drug abuse must get immediate attention.
- All the groups must have a grade co-ordinator which will lead the group for 3-5 years.
- All groups must have a file compiled with referral forms and policies.

# PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENT

## DEFINITION

A person with a physical impairment refers to a person who has difficulties with their physical functioning (Smith & Kruger, 2005).

## MANIFESTATIONS

- Difficulty with mobility, physical health and vitality. Academic, affective, and social problems may also exist as secondary characteristics (Smith & Kruger, 2005)

## TYPES

- 2 Broad Types
- *Neurological related impairments*; e.g., spina bifida, multiple sclerosis & cerebral palsy (Smith & Kruger, 2005)
- *Skeletal and muscular impairments*; e.g., amputations, osteogenesis imperfecta 7 paraplegia (Smith & Kruger, 2005)

## PREVALENCE

In SA, 557 775 learners with physical impairments. 20.99% of learners with impairments have physical impairments (Department of Education, 2001)

## ETIOLOGY

The impairment can be hereditary, congenital or result from an illness or an accident (Smith & Kruger, 2005)



## POTENTIAL BARRIERS

- Depends on type of physical impairment
- Learners with physical impairments do not necessarily have learning difficulties.
- Internal: Limited mobility, loss of sensation, pressure sores & other injuries, incontinence, negative self-concept, emotional difficulties, and academic difficulties
- Microsystemic: Little peer and/or parental support, psychosocial issues such as stereotypes, and lack of facilities/equipment.
- Macrosystemic: Negative stereotypes, limited resources & physically disabling environment (Smith & Kruger, 2005)

## ADDRESSING BARRIERS

- Depends on type of physical impairment
- Increase mobility and functioning via physiotherapy, occupational therapy, support aids and medication.
- Prevention of pressure sores & other injuries & care for learners with incontinence.
- Emotional support
- Build positive self-concept
- General academic support where necessary;
- Aids for academic work e.g. special pencil grips or computers.
- Psychosocial support;
- Physically enabling school e.g. providing ramps and special equipment.
- Challenge negative stereotypes;
- Macrosystemic resources and physically enabling environment; (Smith & Kruger, 2005).

## WEBSITES & REFERENCES

- (Neurological)  
[www.multiplesclerosis.co.za](http://www.multiplesclerosis.co.za)  
[www.ucpa.org.za](http://www.ucpa.org.za)  
[www.mdsa.org.za](http://www.mdsa.org.za)  
[www.mdausa.org.za](http://www.mdausa.org.za)  
[www.epilepsy.org.za](http://www.epilepsy.org.za)
- (Skeletal & Muscular)  
[www.quad.stormnet.co.za](http://www.quad.stormnet.co.za)  
[www.cpaont.org](http://www.cpaont.org)

Smith & Kruger, D. (2005). Physical Impairments. In E. Landsberg, D. Kruger, & N. Nel (Eds), **Addressing Barriers to Learning: A South African Perspective**. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

# COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT

## AAMD DEFINITION

Mental retardation refers to significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning resulting in or associated with concurrent impairments in adaptive behaviour and manifested during the developmental period

## 3 CONCEPTS CENTRAL TO DEFINITION

- Intellectual functioning
- Adaptive behaviour
- Development Period

## PREVALENCE

- Between 1% and 3% more males than females. SES

## CLASSIFICATION

Mild IQ 55 - 70  
Moderate IQ 40 - 45  
Severe IQ 25 - 39  
Profound IO below 20 - 25

## LEVELS OF SUPPORT:

Intermittent  
Limited  
Extensive  
Pervasive



## MANIFESTATION

- Attention
- Use of Mediational Strategies
- Memory
- Generalised learning
- Motivational Considerations
- Cognitive development
- Language development
- Social behavioural considerations

## STRATEGY FOR ACCOMMODATION AND SUPPORT

Step 1: Identify demands  
Step 2: Note strengths and needs  
Step 3: Check for success  
Step 4: Look for problem areas  
Step 5: Use information for adaptations  
Step 6: Decide on adaptations to implement  
Step 7: Evaluate process

## CAUSES: ORGANIC/ CULTURAL FAMILIAL

- Down syndrome
- Environmental disadvantage
- Fetal alcohol syndrome
- Fragile X syndrome
- Hydrocephalus
- Phenylketonuria
- Prader-willi syndrome
- Tay-sachs disease
- Angelman syndrome
- Infections, traumas, malnutrition
- Accidental poisoning and perinatal/prenatal stressors

## DEMANDS ON EDUCATION

- Productive Employment
- Independence and self-sufficiency
- Participation in school and community
- Life skills
- Development of IEP

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR INCLUSION

Supported Education Module  
Personal supports  
Natural supports  
Support services  
Technical supports

## TREATMENTS

Psychosocial  
Cognitive behavioural  
Family orientated strategies

# VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

## DEFINITION

Visual impairment can be congenital, which means that it occurs at, or shortly after birth. It can also be acquired through an accident or a trauma, or it could be inherited (Sacks and Silberman, 1998).

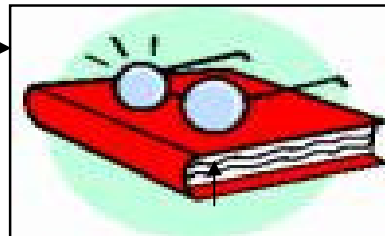
## ADDRESSING BARRIERS

- Modifications in classes: Adaptation of content and method of teaching, adaptation of medium of instruction, e.g.: Braille.  
Teaching Orientation & mobility as part of the curriculum. Teach social competence & language development to minimise behavioural and social difficulties.
- Social and emotional support: Involvement of family members and community members  
Alternate curriculum, expanded core curriculum, school to work transition skills
- Access to: specialised materials, technology and specialised personnel.
- Early intervention improves development in areas such as language and vocabulary.

## Types and Prevalance

### 2 Types – Partial and Total Blindness

- Partial blindness can be describe as the ability of the individual to retain some degree of vision that will affect their fuctioning in different environments. Total blindness refers to individuals who will have no capacity to interpret any type of vial stimuli (including light stimuli).
- Blindness means impairment in vision that, even which correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and legal blindness. Legal Blindness is often defined as less than 20/200 (snellen notation)'vision in the better eye with best correction or visual fields of less than 20 Deegress ( Sacks & Silberman, 1998).



## POTENTIAL BARRIERS

Depends on degree and type of visual impairment

- Internal: Congenital: Individuals have no mental concepts on which to "lock" new information.  
Learning and development can be very slow.  
**Sudden loss** of vision: Grieving process, trauma may delay learning. **Gradual loss** of vision: Individuals can gradually develop greater adaptive skills as disease progresses, however, individual does not know how far vision will deteriorate and may be reluctant to to give up old ways.
- Micro: Teach visually impaired learners & blind learners in same class. Teacher to learner ratio. Non-availability of equipment. Not all subjects are offered Little encouragement to reach grade 12. Specialised staff needed. Limited learning materials for those who go on to tertiary education.
- Macrosystemic: Negative stereotypes. Lack of government support in terms of importing vital equipment (expensive).

## MANIFESTATION

Visual problems can be categorized into three types:

- The refractive type, which refers to interference of focusing mechanism.
- Disease of the anterior visual pathways, where the transmission of light through the eye is compromised or the retina is unable to receive or change the incoming impulses.
- Diseases of the visual cortex, which are either difficulties in relaying impulses from the retina to the brain or the brains inability to interpret the images ( Sacks and Silberman)

## REFERENCES

- Jenkinson, JC. (1997). **Mainstream or Specal? Educating Learners with Disabilities**. London: Routledge.
- Impairments: Strategies for Including Individuals of All Ages. USA: Human Kinetics.
- Mason, H., McCall, S., Arter, C., Mclinden, M. & Stone, J. (Eds). (1997). **Visual Impairment Access to Education for Children and Young People**. London: David Fulton Publishers.
- Peavy, KO., & Leff, D. (2002). Social Acceptance of Adolescent Mainstreamed Learners with Visual Impairments. **Journal of Visual Impairments & Blindness**.
- Sacks, SZ. & Silberman, RK. (Eds). (1998). **Educating Learners Who Have Visual Impairments with Other Disabilities**.
- Van Huijgevoort, T. (2002). Coping with a Visual Impairment Through Self-investigation. **Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness**.

## DEFINITION

**HIV = Human Immunodeficiency Virus**

**AIDS = Acquired Immune Deficiency**

**There are 4 stages of the illness. Can live for 10 years in good health between stage 2 and 3/**

**Stage 4 = AIDS**

## DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES

- Virus affects developing brain
- Affects developing C.N.S
- Regression of milestones occurs

## CONSIDERATION FOR INCLUSION

- Treat HIV like any other chronic disease.
- Acceptance of learner in environment free of discrimination and stigma.
- Advocate for school policy
- Education of disease is very important.
- Disclosure is voluntary.

## TREATMENT AND SUPPORT

- Healthy living and eating will prolong life
- Counselling support provided by NGO's and at SERVICE POINTS.
- Unconditional acceptance needed
- Free from fear, discrimination and stigma.
- Anti retroviral treatment needed from stage 3 -4
- Education of the disease needed.
- Education of living with the disease

## UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

- Treat every child as if HIV positive
- Use UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS at all times when dealing with any body fluid involving others



## PREVALENCE

- 10% of global population live in S.A..
- 1 in 5 people between 20 – 30 are HIV positive in South Africa.

## ETIOLOGY/ CAUSES

- Poverty (Macro)
- Easily transmitted via mucous membranes in the body.
- Vertical transmission via mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding.
- Through unprotected sex (semen, vaginal fluids).
- Direct contact with someone who is HIV positive – via blood.

## LEVELS OF SUPPORT

- Depends on disclosure by the individual and individual needs

## TREATMENTS

- know no cure
- Anti retroviral treatment needed from stage 3 at AIDS stage.

## MANIFESTATION

- Failure to thrive
  - Persistent fever
  - Chronic diarrhoea
  - Chronic cough
  - Skin infections
  - Lung infections
  - Fungal infections
  - Tuberculosis
- These are opportunistic infections and invade the body's weakened immune system.





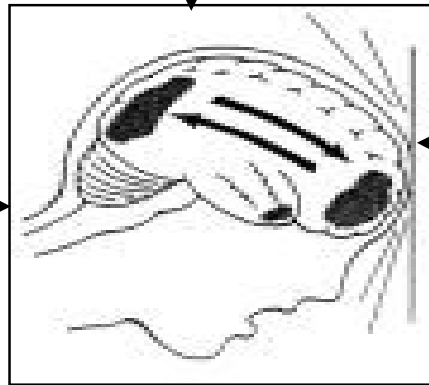
## TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES

### DEFINITION

A heterogeneous group of neurological disorders in the basic psychological processes of the brain and which manifest in difficulties with language (speaking, reading and writing) and/or mathematical calculation (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel).

### MANIFESTATION

- Substantial delay in academic achievement
- History of late language development
- Find it difficult to remember new words
- Problem using cognitive strategies
- Poor memory
- Poor motivation-little active involvement in learning tasks
- Gross and fine motor coordination are poor
- Difficulty with spoken and written language
- Arithmetic
- Coordination
- Self control
- Attention
- Reasoning
- Memory



### ETIOLOGY/ CAUSES

- Poor nutrition
- Dysfunction of central nervous system
- Environmental disadvantages
- Intellectual impairment
- Emotional disturbances
- Organic and Ecological factors

### TREATMENT AND SUPPORT

- Accommodate them through their strengths
- when dealing with new concepts it must be specific, purposefull, direct and clear.
- Repeat instructions
- Use different strategies
- Guide the learners by means of visual and auditory stimuli

# LEARNING IMPAIRMENT

## DEFINITION

A heterogeneous group of neurological disorders in the basic psychological processes of the brain and which manifest in difficulties with language (speaking, reading and writing) and/or mathematical calculation (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel).

## TREATMENT AND SUPPORT

- Referral to psychologists or O.T. as required.
- Remedial work
- Task must be focus and specific
- Stimulating environment
- Keep goals simple
- Be consistent
- Explain what is expected
- Mediation
- Parent and Peer support

**PREVALENCE:** 2% of school – age children, 32% grade 3 learners can read (Western Cape), Disadvantage Communities

## CONSIDERATION FOR INCLUSION

### Individual and Family

- Education, self image, development, medication, Self Management Programmes, Support and monitoring
- School/Teachers and Peers/ Community
- Monitoring programmes, Support programmes eg, reading and writing, Supportive Educator, Adapt curriculum to specific needs, Educate teachers and peers.

### Macro level

- School policy as set out by education department
- Training Educators



## ETIOLOGY/ CAUSES

- Poor nutrition
- Dysfunction of central nervous system
- Environmental disadvantages
- Intellectual impairment
- Emotional disturbances
- Organic and Ecological factors

## MANIFESTATION

- Substantial delay in academic achievement
- History of late language development
- Find it difficult to remember new words
- Problem using cognitive strategies
- Poor memory
- Poor motivation-little active involvement in learning tasks
- Gross and fine motor coordination are poor

## DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES

- Short attention, does not complete task, listening difficulties, speech problems, adolescence- social skills, learned helplessness, inactive learners,
- restless and hyper active, avoids participation
- difficult to detect before school going age

## CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- Errors in foetal alcohol syndrome
- Genetic factors
- Tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs
- Toxins
- Problems during pregnancy

**ADDENDUM A**  
**LEARNER REFERRAL FORM FOR SUPPORT**  
**SECTION 1: AREA(S) OF CONCERN(S) AND INTERVENTION(S)**  
 (This form is completed by teacher(s) of the class where the concern(s)  
 exist(s))

**Learner's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Month</b>	<b>Date</b>		
<b>GENDER</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>			
<b>AGE</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18-__</b>
<b>GRADE</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Home Language</b>	<b>Afrikaans</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>isixhosa</b>		
<b>Language of Instruction (teaching language)</b>	<b>Afrikaans</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>isixhosa</b>		
<b>SPECIFIC CONCERN(S)</b>	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____				
<b>TEACHER(S) REFERRING STUDENT</b>	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____				

## ADDENDUM B

### (EVIDENCE OF CONCERN(S))

<b><u>EVALUATION METHOD</u></b>	<b><u>OBSERVATION/INFORMATION</u></b>	<b><u>DATES</u></b>
<b>WORK SAMPLES:</b>		
<b>Class work/Homework</b>		
<b>Classroom Test</b>		
<b>Behaviour Assessment</b>		
<b>(Baseline )</b>		
<b>Current classroom performance indicators</b>		
<b>Current Grades/ averages</b>		
<b>Other Information</b>		
<b>Parent input</b>		

## ADDENDUM C

### **DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLETING SECTION I (ADDENDUM B)**

- The referring teacher completes learner information at the top of the page and enters the date of completion.
- **Work Samples:** Attach representative samples of class work ( independent work of learner), homework and assignments.
- **Classroom Tests:** Attach student tests (i.e., weekly , or unit classroom test).
- **Behaviour Assessment:** Attach teachers' notes, discipline referrals, suspension letters, etc.
- **Current Classroom Performance Indicators:** Attach written projects, teacher's notes related to non written projects (i.e., exhibits, poetry).
- **Current Grades/Averages:** Attach a copy of the student's current progress reports.
- **Other Information:** Additional information from the referring teacher, other teachers, counsellors, and administrators.
- **Parent Input:** Attach information provided by the parent/guardian to the referring teacher.

Ride Salt- Teacher Support Team (2006).

**ADDENDUM D**  
**SECTION 2: DOCUMENTATION OF GRADE TST GROUP**  
 (This section is completed by the team during initial meeting)

**Learners' Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher(s) Responsible for Intervention Implementation:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Identified Concern(s) to be Addressed** (Choose one or more from the following):

01	Reading below grade	
02	Maths performance below grade level	
03	Performs test or classroom assignments are at a failing level	
04	Fails to complete assignments independently	
05	Has difficulty with short-term memory	
06	Has difficulty staying on task	
07	Does not follow directions	
08	Poor peer interaction with peers	
09	Temper tantrums	
10	Has difficulty with abstract concepts	
11	Display poor behaviour in class	
12.	No respect for other peoples' property	
13.	Other concern(s)	
13.1.		
13.2.		
13.3.		
13.4.		
13.5.		

**Sequence of intervention methods/strategies:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**Content/Curriculum Level:**

**Materials:**

Planned Beginning Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Planned Ending Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Planned Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Planned Method(s) of Monitoring \_\_\_\_\_

Progress: \_\_\_\_\_

Planned Criteria (measurable) for Success/Termination of Intervention: \_\_\_\_\_

Projected Date for team follow-up meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

## ADDENDUM E

### **DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLETING SECTION 2 (ADDENDUM C)**

Duplicate this page as needed. The information required in Section 2 should be completed by the grade team at the initial meeting for the student, and a copy must be given to the referring teacher for implementation to begin the following day or as decided by team.

- **Record the date of initial team meeting on the referred learner.**
- **Record the learners' name in the appropriate space.**
- **Record the teacher(s) responsible for intervention implementation.**
- **Identified Concern(s) to be Addressed:** Check all of the categories to be addressed by the team. Choose as many concerns as applicable. Be specific when choosing 'Other'.
- **Types of Interventions:** Check all of the categories that apply.
- **Sequence of intervention methods/strategies :** Provide methods and strategies that will be used in the intervention plan.
- **Content/Curriculum Level:** Identify the grade level/curriculum content of the materials to be used for appropriate intervention(s).
- **Materials:** List all materials necessary for the successful implementation of intervention.
- **Planned Beginning Date:** Record the date on which interventions will begin. (This date should preferably be the next school day following this meeting.)

- **Planned Ending Date:** Record the date on which interventions will end. (This date can be between 10-40 school days.)
- **Planned Location:** Record the setting in which the plan will be implemented.
- **Planned Method(s) of Monitoring Progress:** Indicate how the learners' progress will be monitored by the team and the administrator.
- **Planned Criteria (measurable) for Success/Termination of Intervention:** Establish goals that would indicate progress or the lack thereof.
- **Projected Date for Follow-up meeting:** Enter the date the team plans to meet again with the referring teacher for completion of Section 3 if applicable

Ride Salt- Teacher Support Team. (2006).



**ADDENDUM F****SECTION 3 FOLLOW-UP/ EVALUATION OF PLAN****(Completed by the team during follow-up meeting)****Date of Follow-up:** \_\_\_\_\_**Total Number of Days Implemented:** \_\_\_\_\_**Date of Administrator check:** \_\_\_\_\_**OUTCOME (Select one of the following):**

1.	Concern(s) better	
2.	No Change	
3.	Concerns Worse	
4.	Waiting until .....	
5.	Withdrawn from school	

**Outcome Data and Results of Intervention (results brought back by the teacher):**


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**Recommendations for future action** (e.g., release, continue interventions in another plan, try other specific interventions, or refer for special education evaluation or to another program):

1.	Continue interventions in another plan	
2.	Try other specific interventions	
3.	Refer for special education evaluation	
4.	Refer to another program	
5.	Other: _____ _____ _____ _____	

**Signatures:**\_\_\_\_\_  
Person(s) Responsible for Intervention(Teacher)\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_  
Person(s) Responsible for Intervention (Teacher)\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_  
Person(s) Providing Technical Assistance (Principal)\_\_\_\_\_  
Date\_\_\_\_\_  
Person(s) Providing Technical Assistance (Team Member(s))\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## ADDENDUM G

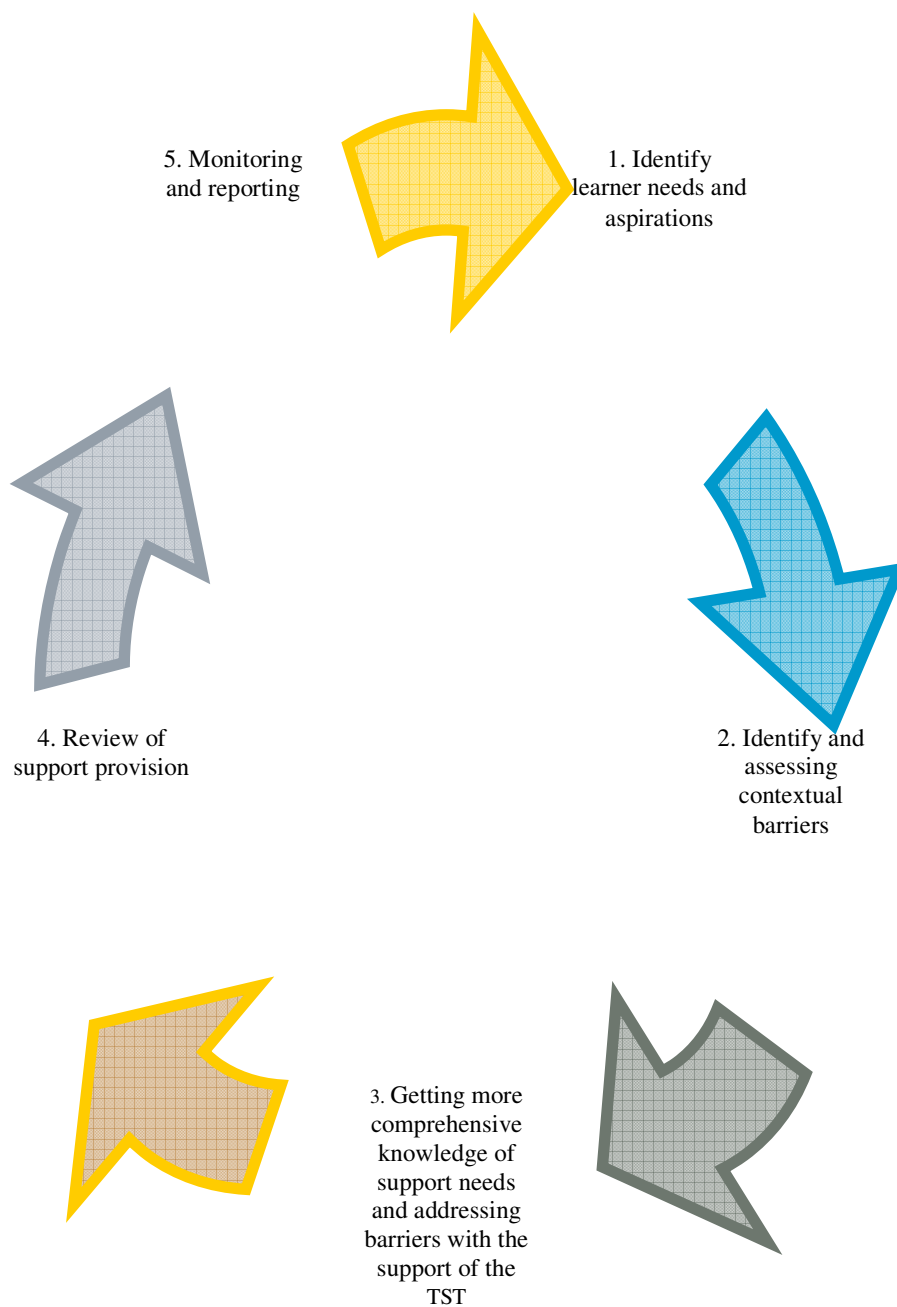
### DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLETING SECTION 3 (Addendum D)

At this meeting the flow chart for reviewable for additional support provision must be taken into account (**ADDENDUM D**)

- **Date of Follow-up:** Record the date the team meets again at the end of the plan to discuss and document the results.
- **Total Number of Days Implemented:** Record the total number of days the plan was implemented.
- **Date of Administrator Check:** Record the date the administrator made contact with the referring teacher to ensure implementation of the strategies in the plan.
- **Outcome:** Check one of the five categories that describe the outcome of the plan.
- **Outcome Data and Results of Intervention:** Give a brief narrative describing the outcome and results of the plan. The referring teacher should bring these results back to the team.
- **Recommendations for future action:** Check one of the six categories that describe the team's recommendations for future action. If 'Other' is checked, give a brief description. (**REVIEW ADDENDUM D**)
- **Signatures:** All members of the team sign under Section 3 (referring teacher, administrator, regular and auxiliary team members, etc.).

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**ADDENDUM H**  
**THE FLOW CHART FOR REVIEWABLE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT**  
**PROVISION**



(Department of Education , 2005)

## ADDENDUM I

### INDICATORS TO DETERMINE THE INTENSITY OF SUPPORT NEEDED

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 5
1.Full participation 2. No requirement for additional learning and teaching support. 3. No additional adaptation required	1. Modified full participation. 2. Requires some additional support to maximise learning outcomes. 3. Adaptation planned and managed at the grade or phase level.	1. Participation in all aspects with occasional assistance. 2. Requires additional support in a number of areas to maximise learning outcomes. Adaptation planned and managed with intervention of the by TST	1. Participation in only some activities. 2. Requires additional specialised support in many areas including ongoing monitoring to facilitate participation to maximise learning. 3. Adaptation planned and managed with assistance by DBST.	1. Participation extremely limited in certain areas. 2. Requires specialised learning programme planning and/or high level of support. 3. Adaptation and continuous monitoring needed in all the areas.

(Department of Education , 2005)

## REFERENCES

Department of education. (RSA) May (2005). *Draft National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support*. Pretoria: Government Printer

Ride Salt- Teacher Support Team. (2006).  
[http://www.ridoe.net/schoolimprove/salt/resources/teacher\\_support.htm](http://www.ridoe.net/schoolimprove/salt/resources/teacher_support.htm)

Sands, J., Kozleski, E.B. and French, N.K. (2000). *Inclusive Education for The 21 st Century*. Thomson Learning. Wadsworth, a division of Thomson Learning Inc.